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THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SALVATION

Edited by

John B. Chethimattam

JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

The Problem of Human Salvation

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Editorial

There is no doubt that real ecumenical and interreligious understanding is at its best today, and the core of that understanding is that God wills the salvation of all his children. Today nobody claims that only through his religion or his church people can be saved. In fact the common bond among all religious people is that of faith, which is a gift of God for all his children. Even those religions that claim a direct revelation from God, admit that that revelation is addressed to human beings with their specific religious backgrounds, and that only in and through that religious background the positive, fresh, divine self-disclosure can be intelligible to them. The fundamental task of religion is to interpret and apply the divine gift of faith to the concrete life-situations. Actually there is a great deal of agreement among people of all faiths regarding the praxis of religion: the need for mutual benevolence, forgiveness and understanding among human beings, and for repentance and pardon for sins.

But there is real diversity and disagreement when different religions give the reason for their faith and their hope. The belief-systems with which different religions interpret and justify their faith are radically different. The emergence of great many new religious movements even within traditional religions has added to this diversity. There is very little hope that all these systems can be brought to a single system or that one of them will eventually replace all the others. This is the root of religious pluralism today that calls for tolerance of other systems. While critically examining one's own understanding of faith, one has also to render to others the same service of honest criticism. Since the human mind seeking understanding of the divine gift of faith is imperfect and inadequate, and the cultures into which faith is translated are imperfect, human institutions, the imperfection and inadequacy of belief-systems will continue and we will have to live with that imperfection.

Human salvation, which is the core concern of all religions, can be examined from different perspectives. Buddhism looks at

human existence of ignorance and suffering as a sickness and views salvation as getting well, getting rid of sickness. For Hinduism bondage is ignorance, lack of knowledge of one's own self-identity, like that of the prince lost in the forest and brought up as a wood-cutter's child. So salvation is attaining the realization that one's authentic self is God, since God alone is the only reality, outside of which and additional to which nothing can be. The Hindu approach to salvation is, therefore, a move from above, from the absolute transcendence of God coupled with his absolute immanence in all beings as their one inner Self. The unique contribution of Christianity is that it looks at human life from the side of the human, the meaning of his life, and its final fulfilment over against the transcendent reality of God. It sees in the transcendent divinity, identical with it, another dimension: a loving Father who gives his own Son for the world, a Son who empties himself to the last drop of blood for love of humanity, and a Spirit who is a gift of love. The mystery of Christ is not the mystery of his divinity, which is one and common to all the three divine persons, but the mystery of the humanity he assumed. In this humanity, what is revealed is not a piece of divinity, but the real Son of God, who shows humans what the human should be, and how he can become a true child of God. So those who first recognize Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of humanity are sinners: the Samaritan Woman, the Roman Centurion at the foot of the Cross, the Good Thief on the right, Mary Magdalen, Nathaniel, and Simon Peter! This is to show that the real divine salvific response to the condition of man is the Cross, the Son of God who learned to be a human being by dying on the Cross. Without the Cross and the crucified Son of God there is no Christianity. That is why Augustine said about the Plotinian mysticism: "They tell me that in the beginning was the Word, the Word was God. But they do not tell me that the Word was made flesh, and he died for me. They tell me that the Word is the light that illumines all. But they do not tell me that the Light came into the world and was rejected by men!" Hope this will give us something to think about.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* discusses this problem of human salvation. The introductory article examines redemption from a multireligious point of view going through the different concepts

that describe it. Dr. Sebastian Punayar explains salvation from the perspective of St. Luke, the evangelist, who is speaking to a multi-cultural audience. Today world attention has turned to the poverty and social inequality and other ills of a great majority of the human race. So the Latin American Liberation Theology has introduced a new method in theology. Dr. Mathew Vattathara critically examines the new theological methodology used by Liberation Theologians in the light of the social philosophy of Karl Marx.

This change in world outlook has effected a radical change in the understanding of mission work. The old style was to condemn the existing evils and aberrations of humanity and to present the Good News of Jesus as the remedy for all human ills. The new style of evangelization, on the other hand, recognizes the positive good that already exists in the different religions and beliefs of people, implicit even in the errors of atheism, materialism, secularism and the like and tries to build on that basis to bring all human aspirations together. Dr. Vincent Alappat explains the dimensions of this new style of evangelization. The complementarity of these different perspectives is obvious.

John B. Chethimattam

An Interreligious Approach to Human Salvation

Salvation or liberation is the primary concern of all religions. But it is understood in a variety of ways. Liberation religions of the East place the emphasis on the removal of human bondage of ignorance and suffering as a sort of sickness. A more philosophical view sees it as the achievement of the highest goal of the highest human faculty of reason either through the word, or the intellectual realization of man's ontological identity with the really Real. But the redemption religions like Judaism and Christianity place the focus in re-establishing the intimate personal relationship of the human with God.

O. 1. The fundamental religiousness of the human is his sense of unfulfilment, of non-realization, of being an unfinished project. This is the basis of religion, rather than the sense of the awesome and fascinating mystery out there of which Rudolf Otto speaks as the core of religious experience. Today the basic religious sense, increasingly felt by human beings of all cultures and religions, is the radical need for conversion, the need to be shaken off a cozy feeling of complaisance and self-righteousness, coupled with a desire to be reconciled with oneself and with others, to level the hills and fill up the valleys and to heal long festering wounds of our humanity. Basically it is the need for salvation, the openness of human beings to grow up, to learn, to become perfect. But this salvation itself is differently conceived by different religions. Hence the attempt to understand salvation in a multi-religious context is the model and acme of interreligious dialogue today. Tallying the concept of salvation in one's own religion with those of other religions will show how each religion is unique in its approach, and yet can profit from the wealth of other traditions.

O. 2. A discussion of salvation will show that though religion deals with God, it is, after all, a human phenomenon. When people talk of God as supreme Being, absolute Consciousness,

the Creator of heaven and earth and the like, the attempt is actually to project the daily material experience to an ultimately transcendent level by eliminating all the limitations of the world that surrounds us. We derived the concept of 'being' from our effort to stand up to the pressures of life and defined reality as that which is in itself and by itself. When all the limitations and restrictions of ordinary being are removed it becomes 'absolute' Being, that means being purified of (solved from) all conditions. Similarly idea of consciousness comes from the awareness of the subject as opposed to the object, and when the limitations of one's subjective conditions are removed by abstraction one arrives at the concept of pure consciousness, infinite and immutable, One-alone-without-a-second. When we look upon the universe as a huge artifact we understand the need of a maker behind like a carpenter or a blacksmith. So our discussion of God is much more an anthropology of the human for God, than any credible kind of ontology of God for the human. The only question is how far the projection of our human concerns does really reach the divine level, so that we can confidently say that human salvation is a divine programme.

0. 3. But the problem of God today is that by whatever name we may call him, and designate him as the centre of reality and the meaning of life, for many human beings he does not seem to be real. In the face of untold sufferings of innocent human beings, widespread poverty and far wider practice of injustice and exploitation by human beings against one another, God seems to be ineffective. Many still call on God, but few expect a reply. Like some one fallen in a blind pit and crying out for help knowing fully well that there is no one to hear the cry, people feel the need to call on God, because that is the only way. There is always a relation between creature and creator. Modern life is ever more precarious and heavy, and individuals cannot know all things and solve all problems. Yet such invocation is becoming impossible, since God appears silent.

1. The common sense understanding of salvation

1. 1 The most radical response to this situation is given by Buddhism. Buddha was reacting against the sixty two varieties of philosophical views that existed in his time on human condition

and the conditions for liberation. He takes a purely empiricist and pragmatic approach and teaches that our eagerness to affirm an absolute self is part of the problem. To consider God as a kind of office-boy out there to respond to every ring of the bell is a wrong view of reality, and it is self-contradictory. One must renounce the thirst for existence and non-existence alike, and should prescind even from the quest for salvation. Life is *dukha*, suffering, and it is produced by desire which should be prevented. Buddha claims to overcome all kinds of cosmology and makes a genuine leap into the void. Emptiness does not exist; it simply is not. The thirst that is forbidden includes not only desire, but also the will, the will to being as well as to nonbeing. Hence salvation is not something to be effected by forcing the hand of a God out there through prayer and persuasion, but rather a process which should have its focus in the structure of our own psychological make up. What is wrong is the structure within which our whole experience is built up.

1. 2. In the *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta* Buddha says: "This world, *Kaccayana*, is generally inclined towards two views: existence and non-existence. To him who perceives with right wisdom the uprising of the world as it has come to be, the notion of non-existence in the world does not occur. To him who perceives with right wisdom the ceasing of the world as it has come to be, the notion of existence in the world does not occur. The world, for the most part, is bound by approach, grasping and inclination. And he who does not follow that approach and grasping ...who does not cling to or adhere to a view: 'This is my self', who thinks: 'suffering that is subject to arising arises; suffering that is subject to ceasing ceases', such a person does not doubt, is not perplexed". The various factors that constitute our sense of I, namely ignorance, dispositions, consciousness, the psycho-physical personality, the six senses, sense contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, old age, and death, are a system of interdependent factors, which also will disappear together. Buddha refers to the simple sense perception of the arising and ceasing of various phenomena in the world, which do not need any special insight. The problem is that perception is in ordinary people bound by approach, grasping and inclination, and associated with the assumption that there is a permanent and eternal self behind the phenomena. If a person does

not decide that there is a permanent self, he can watch the rising and ceasing of these phenomena with detachment.

1. 3. For Buddhism and Jainism salvation is a crossing over the ocean of samsara. In later times Tara, the deity who ferries people across, became the saviour par excellence. Though Avalokiteswara is called the Saviour, refuge and resort (tranu bhoti saranam parayanam) and it is said that all who experience suffering will on hearing his name be set free, he is, after all, only one of the Bodhisattvas. According to Prajnaparamita, bodhisattvas are beings who have attained liberation, and yet want to help others to cross over. Here again salvation is a matter of realization. Buddha recognized consciousness, including self-awareness not as a pre-existent self, but as part of the human 'I' built up by the psychological factors. One can absolutize this self-awareness and make it a constructed self (Aham+kara) as one extreme, or deny the self completely as the opposite extreme. Buddha's middle path is an appeasement of whatever belongs to the self as part of the spiritual progress towards nirvana and enlightenment. Human bondage is caused by karma, the essence of which is volitional activity whether it be bodily, verbal or mental. Buddha wanted to counter the Jaina doctrine which held one responsible even for involuntary actions (see *Anguttara Nik*, III, 415). Such karma produced by voluntary action does not go away but will fructify given the appropriate time and circumstances. It is like an imperishable promissory note and its debt. It is not relinquished by a simple rejection; but has to be eliminated through cultivation (Nagarjuna, *Mulamadhymikakarika*, XVII, 16). When 'mine', and 'I' are eliminated then grasping and craving will come to an end. But the fact is that there is no one without selfishness and egoism. What is required is that one should not reify and absolutize the self as an entity as metaphysicians do. So Buddha's ideal of liberation is that *samyag drsti*, the right view, which is independently realized, peaceful, unobsessed by obsessions, without discriminations and a variety of meanings, and without the need of some one else to interpret and teach it (see Nagarjuna, *lc*, XVIII, 9). In one of his famous statements Buddha insisted that when a reflecting person understands the rising and ceasing of phenomena, all his doubts disappear (Ud.1). Such peace is attained by ignoring the irrelevant and irresolvable metaphysical issues

and concentrating on what is actually relevant. The Buddhist Dharma or teaching about the momentary and impermanent character of the world has at one pole the samgha, the hierarchy of grades or stages through which an individual moves in the path to liberation, and at the other the personality of the Tathagata. The pure illumined one cannot be described in any other way except as an ideal of illumination, the Buddha.

1. 4. The Buddhist idea of liberation which wanted to avoid both metaphysical absolutism and materialistic nihilism was very close to the pragmatic approach of the Samkhya-Yoga schools. On the common sense level of popular religiosity, salvation was getting rid of one's passions and attachments. Similarly in the psychological approach of Samkhya and Yoga the main concern was to resolve the contradictions of the human psyche in the tension between the spiritual Self and the material principle of evolution and action. So the simple practical attempt was to bring the various psychological mechanisms to a certain balance and isolate the Self from entanglement in the activities of matter. The contradiction of the present human existence is that the spirit, which is intrinsically independent of time and place, material conditions, is dependent on the conditions of the body and limited by them. If the spirit can be brought to its own mode of existence and the body brought up to its spiritual mode that would be the ideal condition of man. This is what Samkhya calls the *kai-valya* of Purusa. In this psychological perspective the role of a God or *Iswara* is rather ambiguous. Purely in psychological terms his existence cannot be metaphysically justified. At best he is a model, another special Purusa, independent and unrestricted, to serve as a model, and also render some external help. But salvation remains an inner process of the Self.

It is in this context that the Jaina ideal of personal liberation and self-realization finds its place. Without following the Buddhist negative approach to other religious schools and systems, it tends to gather the honey from every flower. But its concern is to attain the personal perfection of the individual. The concept of salvation in other religions is much more positive and more varied. Even in the Indian context the first translation of 'salvation' was with the Sanskrit root 'traī', to protect, the derived 'trana', protection and 'tratur', protector. A Dictionary of English

and Sanskrit by Monier Williams (1851) gives other equivalents derived from roots, 'raksh', guard, 'pal', defend, 'gup', protect, and 'munc', to liberate. In addition there are also 'natha', helper, and 'sarana', refuge.

2. Salvation through the Word

2. 1. Another way of celebrating salvation is through the Word. Whatever is invisible, including, the divine reality, is present to us through language. It is like any visible reality and it is really present through the word. Since human salvation belongs to the invisible realm it is present only through sabda or language and it is grasped in its artha or meaning. The effects of salvation can become manifest through human involvement and may be perceived to the extent of this involvement. In the Indian religious tradition the Mimamsaka school founded by Jaimini emphasized this approach to salvation. It maintains the absolute-ness of the word. But it took the word in its *laukikartha* or the common sense meaning understood by ordinary people, rather than in the *vaidikartha* known only to the specialist. The text was, after all, for the guidance of ordinary people. Though Scripture is impersonal in its original meaning and in the relationship of words, it becomes personal when used by persons. The human is not creating words but only discovering and revealing them from their eternal existence: Words are eternal, and since knowledge is associated with and communicated through words, word and knowledge are the same. Scripture which contains the eternal words is not the work of any God, but an absolute eternal reality by itself, the *Sabda-brahman*, the Logos. The principal meaning of Scripture was action, to tell people categorically what had to be done. Though the Mimamsakas recognized many gods to whom sacrifices had to be offered, they did not postulate a supreme Deity, who had no special role in their system of human salvation.

2. 2. The religions that emphasize the primacy of Scripture see the words of Scripture as action oriented, commands that enjoin dharma or duty or obligation on the part of human beings. The action, which is the primary meaning of Scripture refers for the Mimamsakas principally to ritual action. Philosophical speculations are subordinated to the ritualistic purpose, only to emphasize

its validity and need. For the sake of the integrity of dharma, Scripture affirms also the reality of the soul, and regards it as a permanent being possessing a body, to whom the results of the actions do accrue. The Veda or Scripture enjoins the acts of duty, specifying also the beneficial results which will follow from their performance. The authority for these acts to be reckoned as dharma and the guarantee for their beneficial results is the eternal Veda, which needs no other basis. They are categorical imperatives as far as human beings are concerned and they cannot have nor need any justification from the part of human reason. Reason, after all, is competent only to deal with sensible data and has no authority over the self-revealing eternal values. So the general principle is that if there is any apparent conflict between reason and Scripture, reason should yield and submit to the eternal value of the word.

2. 3. The actions enjoined are of two kinds. First come the actions like the daily prayers, ablutions, family and social duties, which have to be performed for duty's sake. Though their performance does not bring any special reward, their non-fulfilment will bring evil and punishment. The second are actions prescribed for obtaining a special benefit like children or wealth. Though they are not obligatory in themselves, to obtain the specific results one has to perform them. What about the results intended for next life? How can an effect be produced when the cause has ended? Mimamsakas maintain that the action does not die, but remains in the soul, in a kind of potential state till it fructifies. Evil actions will produce adharma or demerit, which will fructify in evil results. For the Mimamsakas the world has no beginning and no end. So there is no need of a creator God. The individual self is the I-consciousness, which is the same as the ego. This soul has no beginning and no end, and in it reside all the actions in their potential state. Though there is reward for good deeds in heaven, samsara itself is eternal, and there is no question of final liberation, for Jaimini and Sabara. But later Mimamsakas had to face the question of final liberation. According to Prabhakara, liberation consists in the total disappearance of dharma and adharma, and the absolute cessation of the body. For Kumarila Bhatta liberation or moksa is the state of atman in itself, free from all pain.

2. 4. This approach to salvation through the word, is the root of fundamentalism in most traditional religions. Scripture is recognized as the absolute system of eternal values, intuited and put in human words by the seers, or as the direct command of God communicated through divinely designated intermediaries. Human beings cannot in any way modify it or explain it. All human interpretations of divine laws are excluded as superimpositions of human caprice over divine wisdom! Humans have a little freedom only in applying them to concrete situations. The Hindu legal tradition prescribed mantras and rites for every kind of human activity so that all man's actions may be sacral. Islamic Qur'an and the Hadit literature specify rules and regulations for all kinds of daily activities. The Hebrew scribes discovered in the Bible 613 specific prescriptions. Each rabbi was called upon by his disciples to fix some kind of order of importance among these. The opinion of some was that since they are all commands of God all of them were of equal importance. According to Hillel the Silver Rule: Do not do unto others as you do not want them to do unto you, was the essence of the Law and all the rest just commentary. Jesus besides enunciating the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you, gave also primacy to the law of love of God and of one's neighbour.

2. 5. But the basic consideration against a fundamentalist approach to Scripture is that even granting that one had simply to obey what Scripture commanded, one had first to understand what actually Scripture commanded. Even the most simple commands and sublime truths can be carried out in actual action only through the understanding of the finite mind of the individual aided by his senses and his imagination. Secondly in order to apply these to the given concrete situation one has to take into consideration the constraints and contradictions arising out of life situations. The human being is self-alienated, that is afflicted by internal division. Human progress itself has not been actuated by any eternal abstract idea, but is very much influenced by material forces.

2. 6. Thirdly even the simplest Scriptural text is far removed by time and culture from people, who receive it today. It can be made intelligible and relevant only through adequate

interpretation. Besides, any sacred text will have a primary scope or *mukhyartha*, as well as other secondary meanings that support that principal meaning. This principal meaning may be twofold, one to direct the actions of man, and the other to guide the understanding of man. For the Mimamsakas action has priority, while for the Vedantins the principal action is that of human intelligence, to realize one's own being in its relation to the really Real. So the *mukhyartha* or primary meaning of Scripture, according to Sankara, is that Brahman is the one reality without a second by its side, and that it is the one Self, which human beings have to realize as their own self. In the view of Sri Ramanuja, every word in its natural and principal sense should apply to Brahman, which is the substance and self of all things, and only secondarily to the human souls and material world, which are simply attributes and body of Brahman. So the primary scope of Scripture is to direct the attention of human beings towards the Lord. Similarly for the Jewish scholars there were 613 distinct prescriptions in the Torah, equally binding because all of them were commands of the same Lord. But according to Jesus Christ, the law is for man and not man for the law. Even if the law is from God it is not for the sake of God, but for the sake of man. So the priority among the different prescriptions of Law should be determined by examining how they affect the goal and well-being of human beings. The focus of Scripture should, therefore, shift to human beings, to their actual needs and concerns.

3. The ultimate meaning of salvation

3. 0. Salvation is one of the essential and basic realities that cannot be properly defined in concepts. It cannot be objectified into a thing out there to be examined and analyzed. Nor can it be reduced to a simple subjective experience, removed from all possibility of objective examination. It is actually directing the order of things from their present anomalous situation to the normal and authentic state. If, as mytics do, one can leap to the bosom of the divinity and look at things through the eyes of God, to imagine that we have to struggle to attain liberation or *mukti* is just an illusion. In truth, the world and individual human beings do not add anything to God. They have only to realize that the only really Real is God. Hence to

strive consciously and deliberately to arrive at the realization of the Self is an obstacle to that realization. It is like the query of the one standing in the middle of Benaras and asking frantically "Where is Benaras?" We have only to tell him: "Look around, this is Benaras". One has only to look at his own normal self and realize that all his reality is in God. As St. Paul told the wise Athenians at the Areopagus quoting Epimenides: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

3. 1. On the other hand, most human beings are not mystics. They do not have any sense of the infinite nor experience any desire to find the infinite. They are satisfied with their everyday existence, and want only to find a solution to their daily problems. In fact human life is open not only to the Infinite, but also to greater maturity, to wider responsibility, to a growing capacity for truth and love in keeping within nature, though not built into it. God is redemptively involved in the human's making of himself, looking at the profound ambiguity affecting every aspect of human life. His movement towards this maturity is through dialogue and communion. Through possession of language and the practice of conversation with others he comes to be what he is. He learns from others love and hostility, the care and coldness to which he is exposed. Yet, he is not a product of community. He listens and responds, and becomes himself by responding. In dialogue there is both an element of resistance and also a capacity for conversion. In dialogue we sometimes hear the painful word which overcomes us and evokes a response that transforms our life. But this conversion takes place in the light of an inner norm and ideal, when we recognize through conversation that we have not been true to our own ideal of absolute truth. That ideal is the special Word as summing, judging, revealing and provoking us to decisions. The Word is a gratuity, God's own word present to us in history.

3. 2. Another phenomenon of our growth is the communion, by which others participate in the human's self-making. Of course, there is a threat to our identity in the possibility that others may dominate and take us over. Strength is needed in every human conversation. But this does not hide the free and gratuitous gift of life we receive from others. That gift is not only gratuitous by definition, but radically transcends the power

of the human. The human community that surrounds us is more than the sum total of its members. Otherwise the community would destroy itself. It is ultimately the gift of love, which makes us what we are. That love leads us to the final and perfect good made available to us by the Spirit of God. This gift is rendered a generous self-gift from the part of God, in the light the sinful dimension that accompanies the human from his birth, remains an aspect of his life. Without divine grace he/she cannot become fully human.

3. 3. Every aspect of life is marked by a certain ambiguity. Augustine assures us that our hearts are restless until we find our rest in God, and Aquinas argues that in every particular truth our intellect is opening out to infinite truth of which it is capable. But the particular elements of truth and good that we encounter are not pieces of God. The divine revelation in every truth is not of truths about God, but rather the self-revelation of God himself. God communicates himself in his word. Hence truth is always salvational. The message of eternal life like all divine revelation is a way of God's coming to the human. It mediates divine redemption and initiates human beings into the new life promised by Christ. The Good News is that the divine Word is always present to life. Even though we are threatened by death in many ways, and experience failures, still, in Christ God is present summoning us to new life.

4. 0. Different images of salvation

4. 1. Salvation, which faith discerns as gratuitously proffered to human beings, is interpreted and made explicit by various images, which reveal its different dimensions. Thus salvation is presented as justification of sinful humanity, its reconciliation with God, expiation of its guilt, redemption, freedom, sanctification, transformation and glorification thereby producing a new creation.

4. 2. Justification: The first image of salvation is drawn from the judicial system in which some one accused of a crime is acquitted of the crime by royal judgment (Exod. 23: 7; 1 Kgs 8: 32), and is termed justification. The idea was taken from the kings of the Middle East who had a sort of covenant or contract with their people. The law-abiding citizens were righteous

and upright in the eyes of the king. Judaism transferred the idea to the sphere of God-man relationship. The basic understanding was God posits the law and that he is bound to it as a just God. The basic element that unified the faith of the people of all categories was the acknowledgement of God's law ordering all life. In pleading with the Lord for Sodom, Abraham makes the statement: "Shall not the judge of all do right" and not destroy the righteous with the wicked? (Gen. 18:25). In Greek mythology, for example in Hesiod, Dike is a robust and tangible goddess seated by the judgement throne of Zeus. In Solon it becomes the immanent and no less divine principle of law in the world and in civic life. With Anaximander dike is an immanent rather than external force, and its presence as universal law in the cosmos is generally recognized. The basic meaning of the root 'deik' is "to give direction", "to show", "to indicate", "to establish" and what is established becomes an "attitude", a "state", a "mode".

4. 3. Justice shows societal or judicial relationship between God and human beings or between human beings themselves, between kings and their subjects, or brothers and sisters or neighbours. Thus Noah is described as "a righteous man" before God (Gen. 6:9) and Joseph, the husband of Mary, "a just man" (Mt. 1:19). When Pilate's wife calls Jesus a "just man" (Mt 27:19), it probably means both that he is innocent and that he is morally righteous. But the assumption was that all human beings are naturally sinners, and they can be made just only by participating in the justice of God. Jesus becomes almost the personification of God's justifying action for the sake of humanity: "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation through his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" (Rom. 3: 23-25). This means that the justice of the one who is absolutely righteous is demonstrated in the sacrifice of Jesus. God is called righteous in the sense of one who judges and also saves (see 1 Jn 1: 9).

4. 4. Salvation is a more common term derived probably from the Greek use of the term "soter" about Zeus, Apollo, Artemis or Asclepius. It was a cultic epithet used in time of need such as sickness and storms. The term was applied also to emperors

and kings. The word indicates deliverance from evil or harm whether physical, psychic or moral, both individual and national. The Greek term *sozo* does not have the dynamic Hebrew 'isa' of snatching from immediate danger. It means more 'keeping', 'protecting' etc. But it refers not merely to the external condition, but the inner being or nature of men or things. In the religious meaning salvation from all perils was expected from the gods. The important question is how everything can be maintained in its rationally achieved state. Zeus is the one through whom all things are born and are preserved.

The Old Testament constantly emphasizes that human beings, who are without strength or power have to be delivered from all kinds of struggles and dangers (Job. 26:2; 1 Sam. 11:3; 2 Sam. 22:3). All salvation apart from Yahweh is limited. Idols of wood and stone cannot rescue from calamity or bring salvation (Is. 45:20; 46:7; Jer. 2:27f; Hos. 14:4). Only God who has all might and right can give help and achieve victory and deliverance (Ps. 98:1-3; Job 40:9). In the New Testament salvation refers to the whole person (Mk. 5:23,28; Lk. 8:50; Mk. 5:34; 10:52; Lk 7:50 etc.). When Jesus tells the woman with the issue of blood, healed by a touch of his garments: "Thy faith has saved thee"; it indicates that the healing power of Jesus and the saving power of faith go beyond physical life. The same words are addressed to the woman who was a sinner, though we know that previous healing took place with regard to her (Lk 7:50). Particularly in Paul the object of salvation is not the psyche, but the whole man or the spirit (1 Cor. 5:5). Actually a distinction is made between salvation in the future, and forgiveness of sins and justification. Salvation is a holistic vision to which the whole missionary endeavour is directed (Rom. 10:1; 1Cor. 10:33).

4. 5. Another potent image of salvation is reconciliation, derived rather from the Graeco-Roman background. Originally used to indicate the placating of an angry deity (see 2 Mac. 1:5; 7:33), it is used by St. Paul to indicate the restoration of the God-man relationship. God reconciles us or the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:18). God is not reconciled, only man is (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:20). It shows a transformation or renewal of the state between God and man; and it is shown as the basis of the most comprehensive renewal possible for man, since thereby he is made

into a new creature. It is much more than a removal of the relationship of guilt. Through the revelation of the superabundant love of God, who did not find it too much to sacrifice his own Son for the sake of human beings, human beings are renewed in the total state of their life. So they should be constrained by love not to live for themselves but for the one who died for them and rose from the dead (2 Cor. 5:14-15). In this they are not purely passive, but rather made active, giving them both the right and the power to reconcile themselves to God. We have received reconciliation : God is beseeching us (2 Cor. 5:20).

4. 6. Expiation or the Greek hilasterion, a translation of the Hebrew 'kaper,' shows the intimate connection of human salvation with the redemptive death of Christ. Behind it lies the Jewish idea that "there is no expiation of sins without blood" (Heb. 9:22). It was not the blood shed in sacrifice nor the ensuing death that pleased Yahweh. Blood was the symbol of life, and it is life that expiates by reason of the life (Lev. 17:14ff). Surrender of life symbolized consecration of those who offered the blood as a vicarious symbol. It was also a symbol of purification. On the day of atonement the High Priest sprinkled the Mercy Seat with blood "because of the uncleanness of the Israelites and their transgression in all their sins" (Lev. 16:16).

4. 7. Sacrifice is the symbol and means of this expiation. In various religions sacrifice is seen as a banquet of gods of which man is made a participant. In Hinduism the basic idea was that people of a lower caste by partaking of the left-over of the banquet of a higher caste in a way is elevated to the status of the higher caste, while for one of the higher caste to partake of the meal of the lower caste is degrading. The priests in offering food to the gods first extract the essence of those substances and then unite it with their own spirit and then present it to the Deity. What is left of the offered food is left over and those who partake of the left over of the gods are raised to divine communion. But sacrifice is not a mechanical means for attaining divine communion, but only a symbol, which will not be effective without the corresponding attitude of submission from the part of human individuals. The Sermon on the Mount states: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave

your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

Conclusion

The contemporary religious situation in the world is one of conflictual pluralism. It is what Freud spoke of as the "uncanny", a sense of being not-at-home in our world. There is an overwhelming absence of all meaning exposed particularly by the Holocaust and the Hiroshima. There is diversity not only among different religions, but even within the same religion we find the ultra conservatives, the liberals, the neo-orthodox and the revisionists. In this situation conversation is our only hope. Theologians have to develop a reflective language to retrieve and interpret not only the classical understanding of human salvation in every religion, but also the contemporary religious concerns of human beings. Here the hermeneutics of retrieval has to be complemented by the hermeneutics of suspicion that will question our current assumptions. New voices have to be heard in our conversation, of the poor, of women, of the marginalized and especially of people of other faiths.

In listening to the understanding of salvation in other faiths one has to exercise the analogical imagination with a suggestive sensibility that is willing to admit that one has not properly understood one's own tradition, and is, therefore, open to mutual transformation in the process of dialogue. On the other hand, one should maintain a principle of coherence according to which whatever is new is integrated to what one already knows or is more likely to believe to be the case. But the basic criterion is the ethical-social-political framework into which the religious doctrines are integrated. Here one cannot go as a mere herald proclaiming something as established doctrine. There is need to go behind symbols, art, culture and the like and interpret the religious truths implied in them. But the most important path is that of action. For there is no discovery of truth without a call to transformation, no revelation without salvation, and no theology, which is essentially hermeneutics without praxis.

Salvation in the Gospel of Luke

The author in his analysis of the Gospel of Luke brings out both the explicit and implicit meanings of salvation which is shown to be a major theme of the Gospel. There is already at the start a cluster of salvation terminology in the first two chapters. Then whatever Jesus said and did point to the salvation of human beings. Salvation is not merely personal but social, is both bodily and spiritual, temporal and eschatological. It implies cleansing and liberating and making whole. It extends to people outside Israel - even to the whole universe. The message of Luke's Gospel is found in Jesus' words of his public ministry: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

Introduction

The Hebrew Scripture is the history of God's revelation. It is unfolded through the promise and the fulfilment and this we have in the third chapter of Genesis (Gen 3:15). It is the promise of the salvation of humankind. The whole history of Israel bears witness to this saving activity of God. This saving activity of God in the history is the theme of the Old Testament. Hence it is not a simple history of Israel, rather "it is the kerygmatic record of God's saving activity". This saving activity of God is not limited to the Old Testament period. It unfolds progressively, in the course of time: "permitting the flower and the fruit of the New Testament to blossom forth and to ripen on the stem of the Old Testament, while rooting both Testaments in the message of salvation"¹. The whole record of God's dealings with Israel is a *Heilsgeschichte*, culminating in Jesus. God who brought salvation to Israel continues to do this for the Christians which is one of the prominent themes of Luke.

Salvation in the Bible

Salvation is an important theme in the Old Testament, especially in the exilic and post exilic Books of the OT. The Hebrew term

¹ A. C. Myers, (ed.) *Bible in The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (1987) 148. Cf. Heb 1: 1ff.

yāsa occurs 353 times in the OT. The corresponding Greek term is *sōzō* which means save from death or save/free from disease². The prophets address God as "Savior" and state that Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. According to Isaiah it is Yahweh who gives salvation and it does not mean only spiritual salvation. The group of salvation words emphasizes the uniqueness of God as Savior. He also emphasizes that this salvation is not exclusively for the Jews but for all people (Is 42:1; 49:6), and is a theme dear to Luke (Lk 3:6 and Acts 28:28).

The use of *sozein* and its cognates in Luke

The Gospel of Luke is permeated with the theme of salvation. It is expressed by four Greek words viz., *soter* (savior), *sōzein* (to save); *soterion* (to bring salvation) and *soteria* (salvation). Among the Synoptists Luke alone uses the words *soter* and *soteria*. The term *soterion* is used only once outside the Lucan writings (Ep 6:17). All these allude to the name of Christ. The name "Jesus" derives from *Yoshua* which means savior. The position of Christ's name in the very introduction to Luke's Gospel implies its great importance in the Lucan perspective of salvation history.

Along with these Luke uses also the verb *sōzein*. He has a very special fondness for this verb and uses it very frequently in his writings. It occurs thirteen times in the Gospel and seventeen times in Acts. The meaning of the verb itself is indicative. It has two meanings viz., to save and to heal or make whole. It occurs mainly in the healing stories of Jesus, but never refers to a single member of the body but always to the whole man. The double meaning of the verb is indicative of salvation in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus the Savior

The term savior is used in the beginning of the Gospel as well as in the Acts of the Apostles. Mary for example in the Magnificat praises God as savior (Lk 1:47) and the Angels proclaim the birth of a savior to the shepherds (Lk 2:11). Luke makes it clear that the bringer of peace and salvation is not the emperor

2 W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, (eds.), *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago, 1979.

Augustus but only "Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:1; 10-11). It is exclusively in the name of Jesus that salvation comes (Acts 2:28; 4:12). In the apostolic preaching Peter and company proclaim that God has raised up Jesus to be leader and savior (Acts 5:31). Paul affirms the same. In his preaching in Antioch in Psidia he announces that God has kept his promise to the Jews and has raised up Jesus, the savior for Israel (Acts 13:23). Acts makes the universal and absolute claim that all, both Jews and gentiles are to be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11). It is also worth noting that among the Synoptists Luke alone calls Jesus "Savior" (Lk 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23).

Salvation in infancy narrative

Salvation is a major theme in Luke's theology³. There is a cluster of salvation terminology in the first two chapters, especially in the Magnificat, the Benedictus and the Nunc Dimittis. Though the term occurs in the song of Mary (Lk 1:47), it is not very much related to Jesus. However the use in the angel's message to shepherds is significant and christological.

The same theme is also found in the Benedictus where Zachariah prays the traditional Jewish prayer for "salvation from our enemies" (Lk 1:71). Luke uses the term *soteria* three times in the oracle of Zachariah. In this he says that God has raised up a power of salvation (1:69). He not only saves the people from their enemies (1:71) but also gives the "knowledge of salvation, and "forgiveness of their sins" (Lk 1:77). A new future may be seen here which goes beyond contemporary Judaism, or in the latter the remission of sins is not a central theme of the Messianic salvation or deliverance.

From the very outset Luke's Gospel presents Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfilment of the OT hope of salvation. This conviction is seen in the words of Simeon. He greets the infant Jesus in the words, inspired by Deutero-Isaiah (Is 40:5; 52:10). He declares that his eyes have seen the salvation which God had prepared for all nations (Lk 2:32).

This is followed by a quotation from Isaiah 40:5: 'all flesh

3 The Greek term *sozo* and its cognates form occurs in the NT 190 times. The majority of occurrences are in Luke-Acts. W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, (eds.) *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, Edinburgh, 1986.

shall see the salvation of God' (Lk 3:6). The themes established in these passages are present throughout the Gospel of Luke (Lk 19:10; 21:28). Even if the specific words are absent there is no scarcity of themes (Lk 15:1 ff). Luke describes the activity of Jesus in terms of the Messiah as depicted in Isaiah (Is 61:1-2 and 58:6).

Salvation in the Ministry of Jesus

Luke's basic idea is that the divine plan of salvation adumbrated in the OT is realized in the earthly carrier of Jesus of Nazareth. The summary of what Jesus of Nazareth did for human beings is summed up in one word, i. e., Christ-event. It includes the complex ministry, suffering, death, burial, resurrection and ascension or exaltation of Christ. The impact of what Jesus said and did was the salvation of human beings. The Gospel of Luke is an elaboration of this fact.

For Luke this salvation consists in the deliverance of human beings from evil — physical, moral or political. At the same time, it connotes a victory, their rescue from a state of negation and restoration to wholeness and integrity. The wholeness to which human beings are restored is a sound relation to God himself. This implies rescue from sin, the state of alienation from God and, deliverance from eternal damnation. "Salvation" is best summed up in one of Jesus' sayings preserved in Luke 19:10 "the Son of man came to seek out and save the lost".

From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, the author of the third Gospel identifies him as one who brings salvation for the people. This is evident from the Nazareth proclamation. There Lucan Jesus identifies himself with the role described in Isaiah 61:1-2, one of proclaiming release to the captives, sight and freedom to his fellow towns people.

Salvation means social transformation

Lucan interest in the promise and fulfilment is evident in the Nazareth pericope (Lk. 4:16-30)⁴. Jesus inaugurates his public ministry, in the synagogue of Nazareth, by reading a passage from Isaiah 61. The words of Isaiah on the lips of

4 Luke modified and elaborated substantially the Marcan account of Jesus preaching at Nazareth to suit his own ends.

Jesus is an answer to the expectation of Israel (Lk. 4:18-19). He assured his audience that this Scripture had been fulfilled in their ears (Lk. 4:21). Luke presents Jesus as a royal Messiah who offers salvation: both physical and spiritual, both bodily cures/healing and spiritual cleanliness/forgiveness of sin.

It is clear from Luke's Gospel that Lucan Jesus underscores very much on the social transformation together with spiritual awakening. He visualizes a society where human beings will be able to realize their full potential and live it fully. In his earthly ministry he gave emphasis for liberation; liberation from enslavements such as poverty, imprisonment, oppression, physical and spiritual infirmities and sin are all parts of this liberative movement. It will be in and through these transformations in the society, the inauguration of the Kingdom of God is revealed and actualized. The eternal salvation is revealed in human history in and through Jesus who proclaims the good news of liberation from sin, socio-economic and religious transformation and reconciliation between God and man and among themselves.

Salvation means to be free from social enslavement

Salvation in Luke does mean not only the salvation of souls. First and foremost it means salvation of the people. They should be saved from many bondages. They should be freed from the enslavement of man-made laws, rituals and other oppressive activities done in the name of religion and politics.

Though Jesus denounced various types of enslavements and oppression and injustice in society he did not advocate violence to overcome them. He rather advocated "non-violence" (Lk. 6:27-29). He strongly believed that only genuine love can bring about the lasting liberation from injustice, exploitation and oppression in society.

Healing the sick

Yet another step in Jesus' work of salvation was to heal the physically handicapped people. Healing of Jesus was an act of salvation. He healed the sick and gave them power to involve fully in the society (Lk. 4:40; 5:18-26; 6:17-19; 7:21-22). Sickness like leprosy is supposed to have made people unclean.

Jesus liberated them from such uncleanness by curing them (Lk. 5:12-16; 17:11-19).

One of the healings of Jesus was restoring the sight to the blind. This opening of the eyes, is a symbol of spiritual opening, i.e., Jesus' mission to lead human beings to faith in God. For Luke Jesus is 'the light of the nations', who heals not only physical blindness but also spiritual blindness or lack of faith in God's offer of salvation. Jesus is the salvation to all nations. Physical well-being and healing must ultimately lead people to see and perceive God's gift of salvation in Jesus (Lk. 18:35-43; 5:12-15; 17:25).

Healing the possessed

Salvation is also associated with deliverance from diabolical possession. Hence Jesus' saving mission is not limited to the healing of the sick. It is extended even in the healing of the possessed. The great adversary of man's salvation is Satan (Lk. 8:12). The exorcisms of Jesus especially in Luke 4:31-44 are the precursory conflict in the campaign to be waged by him on behalf of the Kingdom of God against the Kingdom of Satan. The exorcism in Luke is a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. Luke uses the salvation terminology in connection with driving out devils (Lk 8:36).

However the healing of the sick and the healing of the possessed make their point in different ways. Healing of the sick is concerned with forgiveness while exorcisms are not connected with forgiveness. They show Jesus as savior in different ways. The demons are the agents of Satan, who invaded God's good creation and subjugated it to his evil dominion (Lk 4:6; 22:53). The exorcisms are signs that the house of the "strong man" has been entered and is being spoiled (Lk 11:14-23). Luke 13:16 reflects the imagery of illness as a "binding" by "Satan" very explicitly. The lame woman is called a daughter of Abraham *hen edesen ho satanas* (whom Satan bound) and her cure on the sabbath is compared to the untying of an ox on the sabbath. So her cure is explicitly a "loosing" or "liberating" from Satan (Lk 13:10-17). Here Jesus manifests his power as a conqueror of Satan. His victory is the cosmic victory and it involves the liberation of the whole creation. He has not only loosed us from sins but also set us free from bondage to

the hostile world powers. The experience of healing has led many people to accept salvation offered in Jesus Christ (Lk 5: 14-15; 8:26-39).

According to Luke, God proclaimed this word of liberation in and through Jesus when he claimed that the prophecy of the proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord was fulfilled in him (Lk 4:19,21). This declaration was an event of liberation and salvation to all human beings, especially to the poor, needy and suffering. The preaching of the good news and proclamation of God's favourable time are one and the same announcement of God's salvation and his rule (Lk 4:44; 8:1). The proclamation of God's favourable year is the time of salvation and divine presence.

Salvation in the spiritual dimension

The mission of Jesus was the salvation which is closely related to the forgiveness of sins. It is very well shown in the miracle stories of healing. The formula "Your faith has saved you" applied to the sick who have been healed (Lk 17:19). We have already noted that the Greek word *sōzein* has two meanings viz., to save and to heal or to make whole.

Luke in his Gospel systematically avoids using the word *sōzein* (to save) for the physical cure or liberation. In such cases he uses the verb *diasozein*. It is evident in the healing of the centurion's servant in Lk 7:3. It is clear from the account of the storm on the sea of Galilee. In Matthean account the disciples exclaim, "Lord, save us, we perish" (Mt 8:25), where as in Luke they cry out "Master, we perish" (Lk 8:24). Since here the question is purely physical salvation, Luke avoids *sōzein*. He reserves this for the expression of Jesus' soteriological significance in a context which is more directly related to faith. However in the cure of the woman with a haemorrhage Luke like other evangelists uses the verb *sozein*. The reason is that in this healing there is a direct connection with faith: "Daughter, your faith has saved you (made you well). Luke also [speaks of salvation in an explicitly spiritual aspect. Here salvation is intimately connected with faith. So in the Lucan account of the Parable of the Sower, we read that the devil removes the word of God "from their hearts lest believing they should be saved" (Lk 8:12). This is different from the Marcan version. Lucan

account emphasizes his basic theme of salvation through faith. According to Luke salvation results from the presence of the Word of God in one's heart.

Luke uses the expression "your faith has saved you" four times in the public life of Jesus. In every case, faith is the basic condition of salvation. Of these four, two he shares with other Synoptics. They are in the cure of the woman with haemorrhage (8:48) and in the cure of the blind man at Jericho (18:42). The other two texts are proper to Luke and are therefore indicative of his use of *sozein*. The first of these is the sinful woman at the home of Simon the Pharisee. She is told that her faith had saved her (7:50). Here there is no question of a physical cure. The forgiveness of her sins is her salvation (7:48). The second case is the cure of the ten lepers of which only one returns to thank Jesus. To him Jesus gives the assurance that his faith has saved him (17:19). Salvation in this case is not miraculous cure rather it is achieved in the particular way that the recipient accepts it. The above four instances show that salvation is associated with Jesus' act of mercy as well as the public expression of gratitude for these acts.

The miracle stories of healing are parables of salvation. They are signs of who Jesus is, at least for those who have eyes to see i.e., those who have faith in him. The Gospel stories are parables of the saving power of Christ. This is clear in cleansing the leper by a mere touch of Jesus (Lk 5:12-16). It is a sign of those who, being sinners, were unable to fulfil God's law but now, through the compassionate touch of Christ are able to stand confidently and to offer the things Moses commanded.

There is still evidences in the NT that Jesus understood his mission as a saving one. This is evident in the last supper. He set himself forth as a new sacrificial offering in whose blood a new covenant was ratified between God and newly redeemed Israel (Lk 22:17-20). In the OT Moses offered his life for the forgiveness and salvation of the people (Ex 32:32). The prophet Isaiah foretold that a new Moses would give his life for his people's redemption (Is 42:6-7). Jesus understood his own death as effecting salvation of the world through the establishment of a new covenant between God and man.

Eschatological salvation

Salvation is linked with deliverance from death in the account of Jairus' daughter where Luke explicitly associates faith with salvation (8:50). The saving and destroying of life appear in the pericope about the man with a withered hand (6:9), where Jesus clearly implies his power to save.

It appears in an eschatological context (9:24; 18:28 and para. and in 13:23; 23:35-43). It involves losing one's life to save it (9:24). Jesus assures the repentant thief of salvation because of his confession of faith and conversion (23:40-43). His prayer that Jesus remember him is a plea for salvation. Even the people who are standing at the foot of the cross ironically tells Jesus to save himself (23:35-39). It is an echo of the cry: "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum" (Lk 4:22f). Luke here contrasts the purely temporal interpretation of the messianic kingdom, which characterizes those who tell Jesus to save himself, with genuinely spiritual interpretation of the man who, despite apparent hopelessness of the situation, asks to be remembered (i. e, saved). In the pericope of the Good Thief the promise of entrance into the kingdom of God is the ultimate and supreme realization of salvation. Luke rejects the merely temporal concept of messianic salvation (23:35-39). He shows that it is a religious and an essentially eschatological concept (23:4-43). Luke through the pericope of the Good Thief brings home to the point that salvation ultimately consists in being with Christ in Paradise.

Salvation in Acts

The Lucan concept of salvation includes both the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus as well as the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 13:47; 28:28). He does not restrict the saving activity of Jesus to his death. According to Acts through preaching they had to proclaim the Gospel to the pagans. The Lord had commanded them, saying "I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47). In the concluding chapter of Acts Paul says to the Roman Jews that "this salvation has been sent to the pagans because they will listen" (Acts 28:28).

It is in Jerusalem where the great salvation events occur: the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, as well

as the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is interesting to note that this Gospel begins and ends in the Temple of Jerusalem (Lk 1:5 and 24:63). His journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:28) is a literary device by which Luke underscores the role of the Holy City in the drama of salvation (Lk 9:31; 13:33; 18:31; 19:11). Jesus journeys to Jerusalem to accomplish his mission of salvation. After the Ascension, the way of salvation history will be one "beginning from Jerusalem (Lk 24:47) and extending to Rome (Acts 1:83; 23:11).

For Luke, through death Jesus enters into his glory (Lk 24:26); he becomes the "author of life" (Acts 3:15) and "Savior" (Acts 5:31). Luke sees salvation as a process in which death leads to life and glory. God has raised up Jesus to be "leader and savior" (Acts 5:31). Jesus is savior because he leads to life (Acts 3:5). The Lucan concept of salvation does not stress the expiatory aspect of Jesus' death but it is means to attain eternal life.

Jesus the prophet offers salvation

Luke demonstrates Jesus as the "great prophet" (Lk 1:70) who has "visited his people" (Lk 2:29-30; 7:16). This prophet not only fulfils the prophecy but brings salvation to the lost children of God's people of Israel. At the Last Supper he presents Jesus as a suffering servant. Jesus tells his disciples that in him must be fulfilled the Scripture: 'And he was reckoned with transgressors (Lk 22:37=Is 53:12). Only Luke records the words from the Cross: 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit' (Lk 23:46), which is a quotation from psalm 31:5⁵. Thus Luke reveals Jesus as the obedient Son of God.

Salvation as historical deliverance

Both in NT and OT salvation is understood to be accomplished by an act of God in human history. Man is saved not by his action but by the act of God in the life and activity of Jesus Christ. So the Christian message is not a philosophy, nor an ethical code, nor a technique of mystical practice. It is kerygma, preaching evangel in the Isaianic sense of proclaiming the fact of liberation (Is 40:9; 52:7; 61:1-2).

5 R. V. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, London (1946) 38-44.

Jesus' work of salvation is presented under a variety of images or metaphors. What is clear is that it is not exclusively connected with death. It includes the whole Christ event. The whole thing is regarded as the saving of God (Rom 4:25; 2 Cor 4:10-11). The activity of Christ brought God and man together. His coming to the world was to save sinners. It is the life of Christ which saves us. Not only by his life but also by his death we are saved. The blood of Christ was a means for our salvation (Acts 20:28; Rom 3:25). Christ is represented as the sacrificial victim by whose death communion with God and the forgiveness of sin are obtained.

What Christ achieved through his life and death was not limited to human beings. It is cosmic. Through Christ, God reconciled all things to himself (Eph 1:10; Col 1:20). It is the new age fore-told by the prophets (2 Cor 5:17). This new age is discernible only by the eye of faith. Therefore the day of salvation announced by the prophet has dawned for men with faith (Is 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2). Today, the era of preaching of salvation, is a day of opportunity and decision.

Universal salvation

This is yet another peculiarity of the Lucan Gospel. Lucan Jesus extends his salvation to people outside Israel. For example, the Lucan Jesus appeals to two (Elijah and Elisha) of the best known prophets of the OT as exemplars of his activity (Lk 4:25-27). These prophets carried out their work for non-Jews. In Israel's ancient history, God blessed co-operative Gentiles rather than disobedient Israel. So also Jesus turns from his own who reject him to Gentiles who accept him. The verses 25-27 thus anticipate the mission to the Gentiles. His mission is not restricted to Jews rather it is extended to the extremities of the world (Lk 24:47). This universalistic attitude of Luke is a reflection of the Lucan Church as well as the attitude of the author.

The newness of Jesus' work

The thrust of NT is on Jesus' work of salvation. "The son of man came to seek and save the lost" (Lk 19:10). From this it is clear that the mission of Jesus concerns the lost sheep of Israel (Lk 15:3-10; Mt 10:6; 15:24). The uniqueness of Jesus'

doctrine is that it is offered to sinners. He came not to call the righteous but sinners (Mk 3:17). The whole ministry of Jesus shows this. It is affirmed in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:10-14). According to Luke at the messianic banquet the guests would be the poor, maim, lame, and blind gathered together from the high ways (beggars) and hedges (vagabonds) (Lk 14:16-24). They form the weaker section of the society. But they form the majority of the population. Though they are discarded by the rich of the society, they have a better place in the Kingdom of God.

In the Lucan Gospel salvation has a physical aspect and a spiritual aspect. One is complementing the other. Both are important in their own way. In the spiritual sphere of salvation faith is an important factor. This is well demonstrated in the story of the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50. In the concluding verse Jesus says "Your faith has brought you salvation" (Lk 7:50). But two verses ahead he said "Your sins are forgiven". It seems that they are synonymous in this pericope. Therefore salvation means the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the peace which follows from it. Repentance and change are conditions of salvation. This is evident from the story of Zachaeus. "Today salvation has come to this house (Lk 19:9). God cannot forgive unless the sinner is in a state of willingness to be forgiven (Lk 15:11-32).

The preaching (*eaungelizezthai*) of Jesus was a ministry of liberation and salvation. Luke uses this term extensively in his Gospel and has its parallels in the OT (Is 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1). The announcement of good news to the poor ushers in a new era of salvation, the time of God's favour to all especially to the poor (Lk 4:19). This new era of salvation, the acceptable year of the Lord, was long expected by the poor of Israel (Amos 2:6-16; 4:1; 5:11; Hos 12:6-8; Ez 22:29; Is 10:1-4; Jer 22:13-17).

Conclusion

So from the above analysis it is clear that Jesus' activities have two fold purposes, viz., to make clean and make whole. It is the two aspects of salvation. Man is a mixture of the secular and the sacred. He is both sinner and saint. To save man means to make him perfect. In this process of making perfect, he

should be made clean first. It means he should be relieved or liberated from the physical evil including all sorts of oppression and enslavement. This was one of the thrusts of Jesus' activity. At the same time he stressed on the spiritual liberation of the human being, viz., the forgiveness of sin. Luke alone underscores Jesus' mission as savior. He has come to save what was lost (19:10) and in this saving process faith is a necessary condition.

Through his life and action, Jesus proved that the Scripture is actually fulfilled in him and the day of liberation and salvation has certainly dawned on him (Lk 7:21-22). Luke's salvation history is not uniquely a Son's triumph but the continuous intervention of God who knows how to use the destructive power of Satan and his cohorts. Jesus' ministry was for salvation which had a temporal as well as spiritual meaning. The message and the purpose of Lucan Gospel we find in the final words of Jesus recorded at the end of his public ministry. He says to Zachaeus "for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10). The salvation which is found in the Gospel of Luke and Acts is receiving forgiveness of sins. It is a spiritual concept, involving the view that every person is in bondage to sin. The exclusive deliverance from it is to be found in Jesus.

An Investigation into the Purview of New Evangelization

New Evangelization, proclaimed by the present Pope John Paul II at the beginning of his pontificate, has consistently been followed up by him. It is more than reevangelization. New Evangelization is a fresh proclamation of the Gospel taking into consideration today's new situations, new needs and new challenges. The author of this article is indebted to the preparatory materials and findings of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation for most of what is presented here. It is the ever new humanity and the new dimensions of the present world and the new contexts that call for new evangelization which, therefore, assumes new functions in the social, political, economic, cultural and religious fields.

The openness, upsurge and awakening among sincere people today have aroused enthusiasm in the evangelizing mission of the Church, creating new patterns of relationships that make life worth living. Pope John Paul II seems to have been the first to use the expression New Evangelization. He proclaimed it at the very beginning of his pontificate and consistently followed it up ever since. During his first visit to Poland after his election, the Pope said in his homily at Nowa Hutay on 9th June 1979: "In this new epoch, in these new conditions of life...we have to initiate a new evangelization". While he was addressing the Latin American Bishops in Port au Prince, Haiti, on 9th March 1983, "he specified new evangelization as new in its zeal, new in its methods, new in its expression"¹. On June 19, 1983 in an allocution to the Polish episcopate at the Marian Sanctuary of Jasna Gora the Pope said: The Church of the poor signifies that it assumes different commitments in different parts of the globe in favour of human beings, their spiritual and material needs and their fundamental and inalienable rights... This commitment

forms part of the programme of evangelization''². To the Episcopal Conference of Belgium, Pope John Paul II explained the new evangelization as ''facing the realities of a pluralistic society, of secularization, laicism, alienation from religious institutions and religious indifference including atheism''³. The Pope reiterated the call for New Evangelization to the Bishops of Spain on 14th November 1986. While he was addressing the Bishops of Granada and Seville thus: ''we cannot hope for greater vitality in the church if all do not at the same time intensify our New Evangelization''⁴.

I. What is New Evangelization

The Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation⁵ gives us deep insights about the New Evangelization. Most of the ideas we present here are taken from its discussions, preparatory materials and findings.

It is a fresh proclamation of the Good News to the present world taking into consideration its new situations, needs and challenges. It addresses itself to the whole humanity with its ambitions and expectations along with all the new realities which it confronts today. The meaning of New Evangelization has three main dimensions. They are, a) New experience of God; b) new attitude and approaches; c) new light and dynamism. We shall see now their special functions in human life.

1 New experience of God

The evangelizer should have a new experience of God that he or she may proclaim the Gospel anew in the present generation. It starts from hearing the Word of God and listening to the living Word with renewed enthusiasm. God who is present in the world through Christ and his Spirit, communicates himself to everybody. If we are ready to give ears to his communications sincerely with renewed eagerness then we can proclaim his words with fresh insights.

2. *Osservatore Romana* 3-7-1983.

3. *Ibid.* 9-6-1985 p. 9.

4. AAS p. 280, art 34.

5. The Fourth Plenary Assembly of Catholic Biblical Federation, was held in Bogota, Colombia from 27 June – 6 July 1990, with 140 participants from seventy countries, representing five continents. The theme of this Assembly was ''The Bible and New Evangelization'' and the key Biblical text adopted for the Assembly was ''Behold, I make all things new''(Is 43. 19; Rev 21.5)

Since we face new challenges and new forms today we have to proclaim the Good News with new means, new enthusiasm, new forms and radical experience of God⁶. The new experience of God makes us capable of understanding what God realised in the past. This helps us to discern future signs of the kingdom of God.

2. New attitudes and approaches

Through new experience of God people recognise Jesus' Resurrection in every day events, opening the Scriptures like Philip the Deacon, discerning God's presence in different cultures, denouncing what is wrong in religious cultures and even in the Church itself, embracing all and perceiving Christ's continued action towards leading all peoples to God. From the same experience of God a new enthusiasm is born which produces courage to obey God at all costs.

"The attitude of dialogue, of listening and of embracing is the first step towards the New Evangelization... The second step is to help the disciples read events with new eyes"⁷. True followers of Christ are to re-read the Scriptures and events in the light of the Cross and Resurrection⁸. The Eucharist, the communion of sharing, 'is the third step of the New Evangelization which opens our eyes and makes us discover the presence of the Good News of the Resurrection in our life'⁹. As a result of these, new attitudes and aptitudes are born in human beings such as humble submission to divine inspiration, readiness to receive the Word of God, courage to proclaim the Good News faithfully and joyfully, loving concern for the whole humanity etc. Then a new consciousness of the Good News influences the whole personality and encourages to proclaim it with fresh conviction and ardour.

3. Renewed light and dynamism

New proclamation of the newness of Christ's Resurrection gives new light to all. The perennial newness of the Good News is awakened in the soul, which induces persons to share

6. cf. Catholic Biblical Federation, *Final statement of the 4th Plenary Assembly* Stuttgart, 1990, p. 7.

7. Ibid., p.8

8. cf. Ibid..

9. Ibid., p.9.

and proclaim the resurrected Jesus. The new power of the living Jesus that contributes freedom, courage and joy is shared by all by which all rise and are reborn. Jesus' Cross becomes a sign of life and hope to every creature through his resurrection.

This new proclamation of the Good News infuses fresh courage, communion of sharing that gathers all in a loving community, critical conscience that reacts before the power that kills faith and hope. Consequently the reality of Resurrection takes place in the pilgrim journey of humanity effecting the new and victorious life. Thus a total transformation or conversion becomes the dynamic process in everyday life creating new ways of human living together with Christian love.

The Gospel proclamation becomes new when it influences the people creatively and progressively with relevance and meaning equipping them to face the current changes, problems and challenges, with new insights, vigour and convictions that emerge from Jesus Christ.

II. Why New Evangelization ?

The focus on new evangelization is the need of the day. This need is based on various factors.

1. New humanity

Humanity is always in the process of renewal. If anything in this world wants to do justice to the humans, it has to take into account this human capacity of unfolding itself anew. This process reflects its influence on the whole creation. The new humanity is an incessant phenomenon in history. Evangelization too has to be new since it affects the humanity primarily which is continuously in the process of renewal.

The present humanity thirsts for new evangelization because of its ever evolving newness. Here the 'always new' mission of the Church is realized along with the new aspects of today's humanity. The Church has to share the word of God with all creatures presenting it in new language, fresh styles and models through modern methods that are familiar to the present world. Thus new evangelization should be an ever recurring event among the humans mobilising all positive dimensions of human life.

2. New Dimensions of the present world

The new evangelization is necessitated today by the newness of our world. The following can be considered as the new dimensions of the world.

- I. Scientific and technological advancements that control nature and humanity.
- II. Ecological and atomic dangers that hang over humanity.
- III. The new economic and social systems that are controlled by automation, new media and computer revolution.
- IV. The resurgence of militancy, secessionism, segregation and terrorism on global level.
- V. The religious fundamentalism that endangers peaceful co-existence.
- VI. The emergence of the Third World as a community of nations, that calls for new relationship among the nations and peoples.
- VII. A rediscovery of ancient peoples, cultures, religions, heritages, traditions and life styles.
- VIII. A new awareness of the necessity to defend nature, life, human dignity and rights of all.
- IX. The growing consciousness about the equality, rights and dignity of women.
- X. The ardent desire for peace and universal fellowship.
- XI. The growing gap between the rich and the poor.
- XII. The sudden political upheavals of Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the U. S. S. R.
- XIII. The AIDS pandemic that haunts the nations in large scale.
- XIV. The mobility of persons and families around the world.

These are some of the important dimensions that appear in the world today creating new world order and life pattern. They demand a new kind of evangelization that ensures global fellowship, justice, peace, progress, development and freedom.

3. Present world context

Different contexts that affect the human lives have great influence in the formation of present humanity which is in need of salvation. The Church being a reality in the world has to be concerned about the humanity as a whole. So she cannot overlook these contexts. "The variety of contexts in which we live today requires that our proclamation of the Word should affect

the lives of the people and allow it to become the Good News of salvation to all.¹⁰ The following contexts influence and form human life today.

a. Socio-political and economic situation

Today's humanity suffers from injustice, inequality, exploitation and oppression due to economic gaps between rich and poor, north and south, political powers that oppress the people producing many victims, unjust patriarchal and sexist systems, racial discrimination, national conflicts, secularism, materialism, scientific and technological dominance, violation of human rights and exploitation of the weaker sections and nations.

Here evangelization has to bring justice, fraternity and equality helping all to live with dignity and security.

b. Cultural pluralism

Various cultures which assert their own particular identity more than ever, exist in the life situation of today. So inculturation of the Gospel message becomes a necessity of the day. The Church has to rediscover the significance, relevance and meaning of cultures encountering them and presenting the Word of God to them. Here new evangelization makes the Word of God as the leaven of cultures that it may purify and nourish them.

c. Religious multiplicity

Humanity is in the midst of many religious groups. Religious fundamentalism makes its aggressive appearance in some religions. Religious pluralism often occasions hatred and enmity.

Through new evangelization the Church helps all religious followers to discover their common basis as believers in the same God. Journeying to the same destiny the Church invites all to share their God-experience and proclaims the Good News of hope. The new evangelization proclaims the Christian openness and Church's readiness to work for the all round development of humanity based on genuine religious principles honouring the followers of other religions.

10 CBF, op. cit. p. 10.

d. Ecological imbalances

Exploitation of the earthly resources through modern colonialism, political power and economic greed causes ecological imbalances. The whole nature is raped by the human greed destroying the environmental harmony.

Here the new evangelization instils a growing awareness in all about the need of caring for creation. It helps to discover the right relationships between humanity and nature.

e. A new dawn of freedom

The totalitarian systems dwindled in Eastern Europe, U.S.S.R. and some Latin American countries. There arose a new society of freedom and democracy. Thus the history of salvation takes a new turn in these countries.

The new evangelization will help these countries to cherish and value the freedom of conscience and religious freedom. It encourages the society there to restructure the social system according to Gospel values.

f. The cry of the oppressed and the marginalised

Peoples are exploited, victimized and oppressed by the powerful because of political, economic, social, religious, linguistic, ethnic or sexist reasons. These oppressed groups are making now a new awakening, becoming conscious of their rights and duties.

To these marginalized peoples the new evangelization proclaims the Good News of liberation, freedom, justice, security and peace enabling them to build a new society of love, joy, justice and peace. The new evangelization encourages and equips all to be with the oppressed that the suffering sisters and brothers may enjoy the Word of God and salvation really in their lives.

g. Ecumenical spirit

Ecumenism, being a universal phenomenon of today's life style of the Christian communities, compels every Christian to witness the Gospel and to serve the whole world jointly. The Christian commitment of Christian communion and love is awakened in the whole Christendom.

The new evangelization nourishes the ecumenical spirit in the Christian Churches becoming faithful to Our Lord's teachings and builds up Gospel unity among them convincing them of the need for Christian unity.

h. New Christian modalities

New forms and modalities are appearing today among the Christians restructuring the existing Christian systems and life styles. The entire people of God are becoming conscious of the need for renewal. The laity are taking interest in the building up of genuine Christian community with great zeal and sincerity.

The new evangelization induces sincere Christians to be prophets of the modern world. It equips them to face the new challenges and problems of the world with Christian insights and bravery and encourages them to proclaim and realise the Good News every where through life witness and Christian involvement.

We have discussed the new contexts of the world that influence greatly the modern human life. We have also tried to find out the role of new evangelization in these new situations. From this study we can be sure of the relevance and need of new evangelization in the present generation.

III. Functions of New Evangelization

Since new trends¹¹ are evolving today in the society the evangelization has new functions to fulfil in this world. Then this proclamation and realization of the Good News itself become new. Here we try to analyse the various trends that appear in different realms of our society. Besides, we shall see how evangelization becomes new in these situations.

1. Social life

Social life is facing great challenges of exclusivism and introversion. Here the new evangelization motivates the people and groups for sincere concern and generous and selfless service through shared prayer, sacrificing love, self denial, mutual help and Christian commitment.

¹¹ Cf. Enriquill Gracia, New Evangelization and The Bible, in *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 9, 4(1988) 9-12.

Today's isolation and indifference often block loving communication with each other. Then the new evangelization helps the peoples and groups to have intense communication with God and one another inducing healthy awareness of global family instead of self-centred isolation.

The compartmentalization of the channels of public communication restricts, now a days, deeper and more sharing and mutual communication. The new evangelization cures this social disease giving many opportunities for better and deeper communication convincing everybody about the sign and communication power of the divine sacraments, of actions for the service of humanity and of educational activities.

In spite of scientific and technological progress and growing awareness about human freedom, equality, dignity and rights, human persons are victimized, exploited, marginalized and oppressed. The new evangelization has to make the people conscious of these evils and has to equip them to fight against these social atrocities with a sense of charity and justice. In circles of social relation we see an increasing recognition of the equality of women and men as people. Evangelization should infuse correct vision to recognise the divine origin of the dignity of women to promote new roles in Church and society. Understanding the growth of interdependence in social realm, evangelization to become new, has to accentuate the intercommunication in all possible levels.

2. Economic field

At present, tremendous changes are taking place in economy. The improved mechanization results in underemployment and increased leisure time in some place while it accelerates unemployment in other places. At this juncture the new evangelization has to defend the rights of the poor as regards employment for livelihood stressing the duty of the rich to work for the common good. It has to encourage healthy, creative and honest leisure for all, both to the poor and the rich.

Scientific advancement multiplies consumer goods and induces fascination and addiction to them. In this situation the new evangelization has to take place. The new evangelization will be realised among the people if these innovations are used

to alleviate the pains and sufferings of the poor converting the people to sobriety, wisdom, solidarity and commitment to eternal values with prophetic criticism of social values and awareness of the sins of consumer society. It has to encourage initiative and creativity in the production of goods and services and discovery of the sources of employment for an economy of solidarity. Because we see in today's society the increase in small enterprises trying to respond to necessities not met by larger industries and market.

3. Political arena

Peoples are becoming conscious of the personal and social rights and of the collective responsibility of all. But they are violated every where in one way or other. The evangelization becomes a new force here when it liberates humanity from these bondages practising the Gospel principles of liberation and salvation. This new evangelization promotes participatory roles for every one in every sphere of life making effective the evangelical spirit which proclaims the principle of authority for service, while people clamour for participatory function rejecting authoritarian approach.

Arms race and environmental pollution provoke the people who stand for peace, defence of the down trodden and ecological harmony. The evangelization here becomes a new power that promotes justice, peace, human dignity, care for creation and environmental balance helping all in their struggle for the kingdom of God.

4. Cultural realm

Modern culture is ruled by two forms of communication: instant communication and mechanised communication. The evangelization becomes new when the Word of God is presented in both forms of culture respecting their proper norms. While the scientific ideologies such as secularism, positivism and economic reductionism prevail in the scientific-technical civilization of present generation, the evangelization has to educate the people to discern the values and counter values of public education and mass media with the Gospel criteria.

Desacralization becomes a universal phenomenon due to cultural secularism. Here the new evangelization diffuses the

faith experience infusing the spirit of God's kingdom sowing the values of pure love and justice and inculcating the right religious spirit in every walk of human life. The political and economical powers control culture and human life today denying freedom of conscience, expression and meeting, and inviolability of home. Then evangelization incarnates newly as a great action that fights for those values.

Evangelization today has to inculcate biblical and ecclesial message in the well developed educational system in various languages and methods adapted to different age groups giving faith training and apostolic orientation. The negative side effects of audio visual and computer oriented education have to be corrected using Gospel methods and human creativity. At the same time incorporating the beauty of various arts and crafts into liturgy and catechesis, adopting contemporary forms appropriate to the audience and inserting spiritual values into the local culture evangelization corrects the discrediting of artistic elites and communicates the saving message through aesthetic means that is appealing to the people.

5. Religious situation

An increasing awareness of religiosity is very common among the peoples who were misled by materialism and atheism. The awakening of ancient religions and the frightening growth of fundamentalism are on the increase. Then the new evangelization makes the liberative message of the Bible, as the point of encounter in reflection, prayer and active commitment at the service of humanity. It supports common witness of the Christians and dialogue with world religions, avoiding sectarian exclusiveness, condemnatory and intimidatory language, false security and economic exploitation among the peoples.

The present era awakens the sickening responses of the peoples to take interest in the goal of the world. Here evangelization helps the people to respond with an eschatological message. To facilitate this action evangelization presents the message of eternal values clearly, attuned to the needs of the masses. To meet the needs that emerge from the growing diffusion of the Bible, the new evangelization has to organise action oriented study classes and seminars. Today there are mainly two types of nations: affluent countries and impoverished nations. Both need

liberation. So contemporary evangelization process aims at the salvation of the whole person and all persons appreciating the apostolic dynamism of popular religiosity with which the process of de-Christinization can be tackled rightly.

The political powers use religion as a tool without committing themselves to its values and norms. The Christian symbols are used by those powers erasing the Christian significance and meaning. Then the new evangelization proclaims their proper message publicising their Christic meaning and transforming capacity in the spiritual, ethical and social realms.

IV. New Dimensions of the Church¹²

The Church today is becoming aware of the new dimensions of her existence.

1. The mystical dimension of the Church. Because of this dimension the Trinitarian community incarnates in the universal Church and becomes concrete in the particular Church. "Precisely the spatio-temporal identity of the particular Church demands in her a new link with the word of God"¹³.
2. Missionary dimension. The Church is totally missionary in each moment and in every person. The word of God is the formation, motivation, and content of her mission.
3. Ministerial dimension. Each ministry in the Church should 'be always at the service of the word, be always nourished and ruled by the Word of God'. The Church is the servant of the Word and the world.
4. Dimensions of variety and multiplicity. The Church has variety of expressions and multiplicity of movements. The word of God, being the common ground of all these activities avoids fragmentation of humanity.
5. The Church that is small, poor and scattered. This Church gives itself to humanity through the Word of God and presents the Word of God to every one.

These dimensions of the Church demand new evangelization from her and equip her for this new responsibility. She has to

12 Cf. Alberto Ablondi, The Bible in the New Evangelization in *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 10, 1 (1989).

13 Ibid., p.11

depend always upon God and has to be at the service of humanity with these features proclaiming the Good News to all.

V. The Church which has grown old needs New Evangelization¹⁴

The Church in certain respects has grown old. New evangelization will instil new life into her. Examples of new power for a Church which has become old are in the Bible. New evangelization will make this truth clear and will present it to the Church.

1. A Church is old when it suffers from divisions. New evangelization will heal the division.
2. A Church is old when it puts on foreign garb, image and culture. New evangelization makes the Church present in every culture and in every environment. Because the Word of God has universal value and power to overcome the ancient monoculture and to insert itself into many cultures.
3. The Church which has only partial and passive adherence to Christian values is old. The Word of God which is given through new evangelization inspires motivation for faith and moral action.
4. The superficial listening to the Word of God is a sign of old age in the Church. New evangelization educates each person to listen and preserve in one's heart the Word of God.
5. Another sign of old age of the Church is the imbalance between professional knowledge and mere acquaintance with the Word of God. New Evangelization offers God's Word which infuses unity to human knowledge and helps us to make a vocation out of professional life.

New Evangelization gives more importance to the Word of God in the Church rather than to her organisation, purifies the popular religiosity by the Word of God and integrates the official teaching of the Church with people's sense of faith that

14 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10. Now a days some authors stress the human dimension of the Church. Being a human Society the Church also may grow old. Here we present the opinions of Bishop Alberto Ablondi, President of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate.

is born of the Spirit and manifests itself in the indissoluble link with God's Word and the hierarchy.

Conclusion

While humanity takes a new direction today, it is confronted with new shocks and tensions. They are of different kinds¹⁵ in almost every realm of life. There are tensions between past and future, means and ends, text and context, word and deed, ideal and practice, authority and prophecy, structure and non-structure.

Never before in the whole of human history has so much newness appeared at any time and on such large scale as at the end of this century. A newness which is ambiguous: it brings with it great opportunities and also tremendous risks¹⁶.

Thus newness is spreading all over humanity. The New awakenings and fresh changes are drastic more than ever. The Church cannot be indifferent to these phenomena. She has to respond to them transforming them into Good News for the humanity. New evangelization is the response that is fitting to our era. It takes into consideration the signs of the times and responds accordingly. It reads the past and present anew in the light of God's Word and divine revelation, discovering their new content and revealing God's presence in them.

Today evangelization has to be realised with new vigour and in new forms, understanding the attitudes, aptitudes and life style of the modern world. The Church has to proclaim the Good News of salvation and liberation newly announcing Jesus Christ and his Resurrection and becoming faithful to the Word of God:

New evangelization will be 'new in its ardour' if it is born of a new experience of God, the Father of Jesus, along with a new reading of the past and with a critical reading of the present reality. The new evangelization will be new in its method if it is incarnated in an attitude that transmits what is being viewed; if besides, an announcement of new

15. Cf. James Swetnam, A commentary on the Final Statement of Bogota, in *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 19, 2 (1991)7-8.

16 Carlos Mesters, The Bible and the New Evangelization, in *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 15, 16, 2-3

contents, it is capable of revealing the face of God to people, and of denouncing that which destroys the life of the people and hinders them from seeing God's involvement in life.

The New evangelization will be 'new in its expression' if it is incarnated into a coherent practice, capable of making the reality transparent and of pointing out the events in which God is coming with power to liberate his people; if it is incarnated into life of the communities and would be capable of leading them to build new forms of living together more just, more fraternal and more human¹⁷.

Thus evangelization acquires new dimensions with the new interpretation of Christ-events attuned to the new situations. It proclaims the Good News of God's kingdom facing the new challenges and preaching that the time has come, the Kingdom of God is at hand, change your life and believe in the Good News (Mk 1:15).

"New evangelization" sponsored by Pope John Paul II demands the coming together of all human beings in a total surrender and worship. It is "new" because this call comes from today's world that is waiting for the Gospel, rather than from the Gospel. Even the fundamentalism may be also a cry against the shallow religion of a liberal and permissive world, while secularism can be also a cry against the phony sacrality of existing religions and atheism shall be also a denial of the false gods people worship. So what is needed is a "new" evangelization going back to the fundamentals of religion, and not a "re-evangelization" in the old style of cursing the world. The newness is in recognising the positive values in the world, where the Spirit of God and Risen Christ are already present and active. When evangelization becomes sensitive to the needs, sufferings and hopes of the present humanity with renewed commitment, it becomes a new force for the liberation of the whole world. Thus New evangelization becomes the climax of proclamation and realisation of the Good News in our era.

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17 Ibid., p. 39.

The Method of Liberation Theology

For some, Marxian analysis is a tool used only up to the threshold of theology, as Aristotelian philosophy was used by Aquinas to interpret faith, and theology itself was done following the old scholastic method. But for most Liberation Theologians Marxist perception of society is a total framework in which Christian faith has to be reflected on in the spirit of the Gospels which proclaimed the good news to the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. This method has great advantages as well as a few drawbacks to contend with. Today no discussion of human salvation could be from above, from abstract metaphysical principles, but it has to be from below, from the concerns of the ordinary human. In this respect no one can ignore Liberation Theology.

Ever since Vatican II, there is a great yearning to make Catholic theology relevant to the life of the people. Traditional Scholastic theology which tried to interpret faith according to the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle was found out of tune with the modern mentality which has very little interest in abstract metaphysics. After all, concepts of the supreme being and absolute truth are not derived from an intuitive experience of the divine reality, but are merely projections of our daily experience of being and truth purified of their limitations. Instead of such projections of abstractions it would be more realistic to start from the actual experience of ordinary people and look for answers to their problems in the light of God-given faith. In fact, the New Testament itself starts from the experience of the poor, the hungry and the weeping, who have God alone as their liberator and Saviour.

This was the approach taken by Liberation Theologians, particularly of Latin America and South America, like Gustavo Gutierrez, Segundo and the Boff brothers, Leonardo and Clodvis, in facing the centuries old situation of oppression, suffering and helplessness of their people. In this they found inspiring parallel

in Karl Marx. Marx with Engels faced the situation of mass poverty and exploitation which resulted from the Industrial Revolution, and sought a solution for the problems through the dynamics of sociology. Liberation theologians found that the same principles could be applied from the angle of faith and an integral theology created for the total liberation of humans. The human as an embodied spirit could not be saved in his/her soul alone, but the whole person has to be saved. Hence salvation is greatly dependent on the economic and social condition of humans. In this article we shall take a critical look at the methodology used by Liberation Theologians.

1. 1. 0. Liberation theology's appropriation of Marxism

When liberation theologians advocated the use of Marxist analysis in theologizing as the most pertinent social science, their intention, at least implicitly, as we understand it from their earlier methodological descriptions was such that it should have a real bearing on the mediation of theological understanding. They considered their employment of Marxism in theology analogous to the use of Platonism by the Church fathers or to that of Aristotelianism by Thomas Aquinas in the construction of their respective theologies. According to Enrique Dussel, "theology has always needed a method of analysis (traditionally almost always a philosophical one) in order to fashion praxis and faith into a methodical, rational, scientific discourse¹. He also goes on to make it clear that liberation theology's proposal to use Marxism is in line with such a need of theology for a definite method.

However some liberation theologians sought to explain their theology's use of Marxism, especially after the Vatican's first document on the former, not in the sense mentioned above, but as a tool to understand the social, political and economic situation. This is perhaps why Juan Luis Segundo says that there are some liberation theologians who "leave the social sciences at the threshold of theology". For them,

The use of the analysis employed by the social sciences would go 'up to' the subject matter of theology. The

1 Dussel, E., "Liberation and Marxism", The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 34 (1988), 189-220, p. 195-196:

latter has its own specific criteria and would not then be subordinated to the hermeneutic relativization emanating from the analysis of "reality". The question, then, is one of having recourse to social analysis as a way of understanding a situation, and not as a way of studying theological subjects.²

But, according to him, it is not possible to raise an "epistemological barrier", as in the above passage, regarding the use of social sciences in theology. Dussel also, we think, implies the same when he notes that in the relationship between Marxism and theology there can no longer be "a question of separating a Marxist philosophy that has to be rejected from a Marxist analysis that can be accepted" — which indicates a dualism between the use of Marx's philosophy and analysis.³

At this point, therefore, we consider worth pointing out, though in passing, that Clodovis Boff, in his well known work, *Theology and Praxis* has adopted a position similar to the one described above by Segundo.⁴ This text by Boff is one of the most important methodological works to have come out of Latin America.

Clodovis Boff, in the words of A. Sandin Fremaint, "sets out to bring order to the field of liberation theology by establishing the epistemological conditions under which such a theology can claim to be 'theology' and not another type of discourse. He groups the methodological problems which arise in liberation theology into three areas: the relationship between theology and social sciences, between theology and scripture and that between theology and praxis. These three areas, in fact, correspond to the three parts composing the structure of his methodological model for a political theology. The first part is constituted by what he calls 'socio-analytical mediation'. It furnishes, by recourse to social sciences, 'the (theoretical) 'material' object of

2 Segundo, J. L., *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church* (trans. J. W. Diercksmeier), San Francisco, 1987, p. 133.

3 Dussel, E., "Liberation and Marxism", pp. 211 & 212.

4 Boff, C., *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (trans. R. R. Barr), Maryknoll, N. Y., 1987. The original version of this book (*Teologia e pratica: Teologia do político e suas*).

political theology". With the second part is associated the function called "hermeneutic mediation". It "consists in the interpretation of an object, in this case 'the political' from a point of departure in the Christian Scriptures". This part, therefore, deals "with the 'specifically theological approach' to the theoretical material object", made available by the first part. The third part concerns "the relationship of (theological) 'theory' and (political) 'praxis'. The discussion of praxis in itself would be the elaboration of a political theology.

In his model for the construction of theology, Boff follows the process of theoretical production in general as delineated by Louis Althusser. Following Althusser, then, the process of a theoretical practice comports three 'moments' (levels or instances): a 'first generality', a 'second generality', and a 'third generality'. The first generality could be considered as the raw material for theory. The second generality is "the theoretical means of production, the 'corpus of concepts', or the 'theory' of a science in a given phase of its development". The third generality is the theory that is produced. He sums up the process by which theory is produced: "theoretical practice produces third generality by the operation of a second generality upon a first generality".

Boff's approach involves an attempt which goes against the very innovative intentions of earlier liberation theologians. This becomes particularly evident when he limits the role of socio-analytic mediation in the total process of the production of theology to the area determined by the first generality. What seems to us is that his effort is directed to making the area of the second generality independent and autonomous for hermeneutic mediation by removing the former from the influence of socio-analytic mediation. Boff himself says that "thanks to socio-analytical mediation, political theology receives a theoretical object, or "reading text". Thanks to its hermeneutic mediation it receives the means of appropriating this object in a manner proper to itself."

Moreover, in line with this approach he makes a distinction between two types of theologies called "first" and "second" theology.

...in order to understand correctly the theology of the political, it became necessary to place it within a broader

context. This is what led me to make a distinction between what I call "first" and "second" theology. The former treats directly of specifically "religious" realities — the classic themes of God, creation, Christ, grace, sin, eschatology, the virtues, the commandments, and so on. The latter will have "secular" realities for its subject matter, for example, culture, sexuality, or history — including here, political history⁵.

Further, there is an attempt by him to place first theology on the side of the hermeneutic mediation and to make it the second generality of the second theology.

If we were to analyze, then, how the process of a theology of the political is concretely effectuated, we should see that it presupposes at least two disciplined discourses: 1) the discourse of first theology, on the side of hermeneutic mediation; 2) the discourse of the sciences of the social, on the side of socio-analytic mediation⁶.

As an example, regarding the relationship between salvation and liberation, "Second theology does not work 'upon' the concept of salvation (as a first generality), but works precisely 'with' the concept of salvation as 'its' second generality, which first theology has produced and placed at its disposition..."⁷

According to Boff, liberation theology is considered as a particular branch of political theology, while the latter is included within the confines of second theology. He knows very well that his stance

does not coincide with that expressed by the liberation theologians, when they express an epistemological position. They oppose what they call "theology of genitives", in which liberation would be no more than "one subject among many". "Their claim, on the contrary, is that liberation is a kind of "horizon", against which the whole tradition of the faith is to be read."⁸

Moreover, disagreeing with liberation theology's view regarding the use of Marxist analysis in theology, he writes:

In my view, where theological practice is concerned, a

5 Ibid p. xxviii.

6 Ibid p. 79.

7 Ibid, p. 81.

8 Ibid, p. xxix. The position in the methodological texts of liberation theologians would mean that the socio-analytical mediation has a real bearing even with respect to the second generality in the theological construction.

Marxist analysis can be only a first moment, doubtless necessary, but always antecedent — as socio-analytic mediation. Theology, in order to pronounce its own proper discourse, shall have to open a horizon of its own — by its hermeneutic mediation. In this second moment, Marxist instrumentality becomes, in the proper sense of the word, nonpertinent. We have the contrary tendency (rather than system) in Hugo Assmann's *Nomad Church*, where the author carries out a sociological analysis of Christianity rather than a Christian analysis of society.

We have presented above a brief critical analysis of C. Boff's approach so that it should be clear what was the intention of liberation theologians when they advocated the use of Marxist analysis in doing theology. It was to do theology from the perspective of Marxist categories in the same way as "Thomas of Aquinas 'entered' into the field of "Aristotelianism" and "from within" began a 'creative' process". Clodovis Boff, as we understand him from his work *Theology and Praxis*, disapproves such an approach and leaves the use of Marxism, as in the words of Segundo, "at the threshold of theology".

1 1. 1. What do they understand by Marxism?

After having recalled the sort of relationship which liberation theologians advocated between Marxist analysis and theology, it is good to go back to see briefly what their general understanding of Marxism is. Regarding their general view of Marxism, we think that it more or less agrees with an explanation given by a Marxist, Milan Machovec in his book *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*⁹. According to this author, Marx has given us a 'scientific program' the historical materialistic methodology, which implies a radical critical approach leading to subjecting everything to scientific criticism.

For liberation theologians, what is of importance is the understanding of Marxism as a scientific method. Marxism is here conceived by them as providing a 'conceptual device' to understand the social processes of the world, or in other words, as the broadest and most comprehensive of the theoretical

9 Machovec, M., *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*, Philadelphia, 1976.

approaches to human historical reality¹⁰. It is along this line that they advocate the use of Marxism in theology.

At the same time, however, we cannot separate the method from Marx's philosophical insights. According to Hinkelammert, "The method 'is' the conception of the human being"¹¹. It entails not only a concept of man based on the notion of praxis but also an understanding of history and society, known as Marx's dialectical, historical materialism. Indeed, these elements which are mentioned to make up the "indispensable Marxist contribution" constitute the method¹². These however, have also caused objections to be raised against accepting the Marxist method. It is in the light of those objections that we examine whether it is possible to justify liberation theology's appropriation of Marxism.

1. 2. 0. Questions about objectivity and universality

It is the objections raised by academic theologians that we consider first. What in the methodology of liberation theology causes concern for those theologians is the theo-praxis connection very much emphasized by it. In particular, liberation theology's engagement in a partisan praxis as a methodological starting point, as is evident in its advocacy stance of the option for the poor, has been the major issue of disagreement for them.

Liberation theology's claim, however, is that intellectual neutrality is impossible and therefore, all theology is neither completely value-free nor undetached. The point is whether one is conscious or not of one's bias. Since this is the case, liberation theology adopts "the option for the poor" as its particular perspective from which it tries to theologize. Moreover, according to it, this provides theology with a privileged hermeneutical perspective.

10 Fierro, A., *The Militant Gospel: A Critical Introduction to Political Theologies*, Maryknoll (NY.), 1977, p. 366. Also see Petulla, J., *Christian Political Theology: A Marxian Guide*, Maryknoll (NY.), 1972, pp 2-5.

11 Hinkelammert, F. J., *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (trans. P. Berryman), Maryknoll (NY.), 1986, p. 271

12 On what is permanent and indispensable in Marxism, see Miquez Bonino, J., *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution*, Grand Rapids, 1976, pp. 91-94.

Thus opting for a partisan praxis and granting it a hermeneutical privilege are fundamental to the method of liberation theology. But, for the academic critics of liberation theology those are the most discomfiting aspects of its method. They believe that the stance of admitting a "hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed" does not encourage theological reflection on a scientific basis. The danger they see in it is theology becoming onesided and partisan, and trying to avoid self-criticisms and even dialogue with other perspectives. Therefore, they accuse liberation theology of relativizing objectivity and universality in its reflection¹³.

In the light of the above criticism, our concern here is how to explain the use of Marxist analysis by liberation theology, since we already know that [the methodological stance of the latter, in that it assigns a special epistemological privilege to its option for the poor, is derived from the former. What we believe is that the hermeneutical limitations of partisanship and relativization which have been pointed out by academic theologians are not something specifically due to Marxist analysis. As Segundo writes, "The recognition of the conditioning that affects our knowledge of reality and our approximation of the truth is proper to all of today's social sciences¹⁴. But, however, this fact alone, namely that the limitations of partisanship and relativization will be present in every form of analysis, does not properly justify the use of Marxist analysis. Therefore, what we shall try to show below is that Marxist analysis is not only aware of those limitations, but also destined to overcome them.

1. 2. 1. Marxist method is sound and realistic

The general attitude from which liberation theology deals with Marxism, is to regard the latter as a science in the sense of a scientific method which provides ways of analyzing every social process. Now, in order to show that a theological method

13 See Tracy, D., *Plurality and Ambiguity*, p. 141, note, 56, and also Markus, G. "What Future for Liberation Theology?", *New Blackfriars*, 72, 853 (1991) 441-450.

14 Segundo, J. L., *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church* (trans. J. W. Diercksmeier), San Francisco, 1987, p. 124.

based on it guarantees, as against the criticism of academic theology, the critical and scientific nature of reflection, we think that three points deserve to be mentioned here.

1. First, we consider the explanation which Marx has offered for his method of investigation.

Marx clearly makes two sets of distinctions: First, he draws a contrast between a materialistic and therefore scientific method, and a non-materialistic and thus non-scientific one. Then, against his materialistic approach which acknowledges the importance of history, he points to an abstract materialism that excludes the historical process, which makes it defective. By bringing out these distinctions Marx is actually describing his materialistic method as scientific and historical. According to him, it is scientific and historical, because it avoids making sweeping, atemporal and general abstractions, and instead rests "upon a detailed study of the actual, concrete material conditions of life at every particular time and place!"⁵

2. In reality, for Marx the objectivity and scientificity derive from the concreteness of the material structure of human life. It can be safely assumed that the distinction which Marx makes between the "superstructure" and the material or economic "structure" (or "infrastructure") is, as in Segundo's words, "designed to underline the greater guarantee of objectivity, scientificity, and truth in cognitive data relating to, or deriving from, the latter level". There is here, however, a fear that economics becomes the ultimate determining factor in social life. In order to address ourselves to this problem, therefore, we have to say, as our second point, something about Marx's economic rationality.

Marx's economic rationality involves three concepts: economics, needs and social activity. Explaining what these concepts mean, Hinkelammert writes:

...'economics' is the sphere of production and reproduction of material life. From this starting point there is deduced a concept of 'needs' based on the fact that for natural reasons (indeed, natural laws) the reproduction of material life is

15 Davis, C., *Theology and Political Society*, Cambridge, 1980, p. 127. However, we have to make a remark here that even though it was Marx's intention to go on analyzing, the real existing socialism has not been faithful to this rule.

impossible without a certain minimum of material goods for consumption. Implicit in these concepts is another, that of 'social activity' which means any human activity that is objectively made possible by the collaboration of others. Any human activity that directly or indirectly takes place within a social division of labor is social activity. Inasmuch as there is no human life without a division of labor, all human activity is social activity: the human being is a social being¹⁶.

In this reasoning, the economic sphere is first of all concerned about the production of material things without which there could be no human existence. However, it is also something more, as it recognizes our dependence on nature and on other fellow humans in the production of such things.

Further, these concepts which constitute the economic sphere are, as Hinkelammert says, objective and can be empirically ascertained. This is so, because the economic sphere is, in the words of A. K. Min, "at once the materialization of our social relations and the socialization of our material relations¹⁷. Moreover, through this interdependent web of relations it sustains and controls the shape and direction of human life, the intellectual shape as well as the material.

The economic sphere, therefore, is not just one sphere among others; it is also a unifying, totalizing sphere, in its own way, with a shaping power over other spheres and the whole. It conditions not only the production and distribution of material things but also, through such production and distribution, the relations of power among and over human beings (politics) and the quality and availability of certain types of culture (ideology)¹⁸.

It is in this sense that Marx makes the material sphere the empirical basis for the superstructural realities. By this he is saying nothing more than that the real life is the basis and source of all human activities. Engels describes it as follows: "The determining element in history is, in the last resort, the production

16 Hinkelammert, F. J., *The Ideological Weapons of Death*, p. 63.

17 Min, A. K., *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation*, Albany, 1989, p. 24.

18 Ibid.

and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted''.

3. In A. K. Min's view, Marx's interpretation of the economic sphere is a rejection of the contemplative model of looking at human life from 'above'. His method instead looks at life from 'below'. For him, as Miguez Bonino says, "history is not primarily the unfolding of man's consciousness or of his ideas but the dynamics of his concrete activity, the main form of which is the work through which he transforms nature in order to respond to the totality of his needs"¹⁹. Therefore, according to Marx, human activity aimed at the transformation of the material world becomes the essential, unifying principle of human life. It is at this point that he makes the move to base his analysis on the concept of praxis.

However, Marx's method is not a pure science. Further, it is explicitly identified with a partisan, revolutionary praxis. Does it then in its pursuit of action leave thinking behind? Will not a theory emerging from such a praxis be partisan? In order to answer these problems we have to recall Marx's concept of praxis.

We can find in Marx a two-fold use of the term praxis, in a general sense and in a narrower sense. In the broad and general sense, praxis means human creative activity which has for its object nature as well as other human persons. Understood thus, it refers to the concrete life-process of human persons — "the process of productive labor as the interrelationship and interaction of man with nature". Praxis is in this sense considered to be the essence of human existence. Moreover, it is clear that the term is here taken "in a sufficiently comprehensive sense as the fundamental rootedness of life which grounds all understanding and living"²⁰.

When Marx speaks of the mode of production of material life determining consciousness, what he has in mind is the idea of praxis in the broader sense explained above. We already know of his famous sentence: "Life is not determined by

19 Miguez Bonino, J., *Christians and Marxists*, p. 92.

20 Grant, C., "The Promise and Perils of Praxis", *Cross Currents*, 40,1 (1990) 64-87, p. 65.

consciousness, but consciousness by life²¹. This is not, in our opinion, a denial of the importance of theory. Marx has not equated praxis with practice; nor has he emphasized the practical as opposed to the theoretical. What he has tried to establish is "a unity of theory and praxis". In other words, he demands our recognition of the fact that our thinking has its origins in real life. Therefore, as Charles Davis writes,

"Theory is the consciousness of 'praxis'; 'praxis' is action infused with and made conscious by theory. Marx rejected the notion of theory independent of 'praxis', theory as a presuppositionless contemplative recognition of a stable object."²²

When praxis is understood in the sense described above, it may not pose serious problems for academic theologians who want to ascertain the objectivity and universality necessary for theory. But the term is often used by Marx to denote a definitive form of praxis, the revolutionary activity of the proletariat. His emphasis is then on effecting social transformation to which end the exploited workers revolting against the current situation are expected to overthrow the prevailing arrangements of the productive process. His commitment to this social change in favour of the exploited workers characterizes his advocacy of praxis as it is clear from the most famous of his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."²³ What needs then to be explained is how a theory which emerges from this sort of partisan praxis can be universal and objective.

According to Marx, human self-production is the fundamental reality. It is through such productive activities and social relationships that humans humanize themselves. In course of time praxis becomes alienated. But revolutionizing of praxis removes alienation and praxis becomes humanizing. At the same time contradictions in theory are also overcome.

21 Marx, K., "The German Ideology", p. 47.

22 Davis, C., "Theology and Praxis", *Cross Currents* 23, 2 (1973), 154-168, p. 159.

23 Marx K., "Theses on Feuerbach", in Marx, K. & Engels, F., *On Religion*, New York, 1964, p. 71.

There is also another reason why revolutionary praxis sets for itself the goal not to perpetuate the limitations in the development of theory. For Marx, to suppose to have attained full truth valid for all time is to fall into ideology. The possibility for attaining objective truth is subject to the basic historicity of human existence and also bound to the limitations it imposes. By this he did not mean that humans could not at all transcend these limitations. What he rejected was any claim for access to real and positive truth other than through activities directed to humanizing the world. The supposition behind this rejection was that the truth of anything that exists is derived from what it is meant to become. In other words, as S. Kappen puts it, "a theory is true in so far as it reflects reality both in its *being* and its *becoming* and is itself a factor contributing to the transition from the *is* to the *out to be*"²⁴. Seen from this angle, it follows that revolutionary activity, as far as it contributes to envisage and actualize the previously unknown possibilities for society to become ever more human, helps people to arrive at a correct theory. It must at the same time be emphasized that revolutionary praxis is based on a critical understanding of the present alienated state of society. The notion of critique is so important to Marx that he, as Charles Davis notes takes critical theory to be "the conscious component of revolutionary praxis"²⁵.

We have described these points above in order to show that Marxist analysis has in its original thrust a truly scientific approach. However, it has to be admitted that one could notice among the orthodox Marxists an attitude which was dogmatic and thus anti-scientific. But, liberation theologians have not shown any attraction towards orthodox Marxism. What they have tried to do in their scientific work as theologians is to make their own those original profound insights of Marx.

1. 2. 2. Option for the poor - a relative but necessary condition for theology

Having thus shown that Marxist method was not against theoretical rigour or scientificity in analysis, let us now see how

24 Kappen, S., *Liberation Theology and Marxism*, Puntamba, 1986, p. 80. However, it has to be pointed out that the truth that is spoken of here is, according to Marx, different from the magical truth of the natural sciences which is accessible to all through sense perception.

25 Davis, C., "Theology and Praxis", p. 159.

or in what way we can demonstrate the particular hermeneutical perspective afforded by liberation theology's prior option for the poor, to have a methodological priority in theology. By 'the option for the poor' we do not here mean an option as an 'evangelical exigency' but as a necessary condition for scientific, academic theological reflection. Further, the basis for this "hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed" derives from the basic assumptions behind Marxist analysis.

The theologians of liberation accept the Marxist principle of base-superstructure relationship. This principle maintains that all forms of consciousness, including religious consciousness, are superstructural phenomena which are determined or conditioned by the material base, such as the production processes. It is, however, important to note that these theologians do not have in mind a base-superstructure relationship bound to a causalist or mechanistically deterministic line of thinking. By introducing this principle into theology they are only saying that the socio-economic conditions at any given period affect the theological ideas of that time. Furthermore, they also argue that as all human beings, including theologians, live in a society divided into social classes, they are to some extent influenced and conditioned by the place and position they hold "in the web of production processes and relationships".

Now that the determining character of the material base is accepted, to hold that there is some sort of absolute objectivity or complete neutrality becomes impossible. This is simply due to the fact of the "concrete sociality and historicity of human existence". Therefore, as Alfredo Fierro says, "Every theory and every theology has its conditioning factors. One must try to choose them well, to situate oneself in those conditions that will make it possible to formulate a correct theory or theology". In other words, it all comes to theologians opting consciously some kind of partisanship. Every option, however, is not equally valid and reasonable. The only question then for a particular theologian is to be subjectively conscious of the following: "for whom? for what cause? for whose interest and power? and on what basis?

Liberation theologians, as it is well known, seek to theologize from the stand-point of the poor. But the question is why they attribute to their perspective a methodological priority over

other perspectives. According to us, the hermeneutical privilege of the poor consists essentially in being of help to discover the theological theory's practical rootedness in real concrete life." Inasmuch as theology is a superstructural phenomenon, it can perform a legitimizing function for the structures of oppression in society. Theological texts "can also be superstructural justifying statements of "the systemic distortion" of the will of God in situations of inhumanity. It is then possible that some theological ideas have their roots in structures "which in varying degrees and to different extents are allied to existing structures of power and oppression". Therefore the hermeneutical privilege of the option for the poor lies, as in John O'Brien's view, in a "therapeutic role" which means that it creates conditions for theologians to examine and discover their practical rootedness and hence to keep their theology free from legitimizing the structures of oppression.

This therapeutic role has also another, though indirect, function in matters of theological reflection. As we know, it is from within history and not from outside, that theologians have to make their reflections. Therefore, their perspectives are allied with those of the particular groups to which they belong. However as regards the perspective of liberation theology, it pressurizes theologians into an awareness of certain real facts about the present human situation and also, in the light of these facts, to pose questions to the interpretations of faith, which otherwise would have been overlooked. As Gutierrez writes, it "affords a perception of aspects of the Christian message that escapes other approaches".²⁶

It is, however, important to ask whether those facts brought to the awareness by the perspective of liberation theology represent the essential issues of the given moment, its real crises and contradictions. If that perspective can capture the real crisis of the time the one which concerns all humans, then it is also universal — which fact justifies the opting for it. Liberation theologians take their perspective in that of the poor and the oppressed and regard it to be universal. According to them, the universal human crisis of the present moment is manifest in the experience of the poor and the oppressed who constitute the majority of

26 Gutierrez, G., *The Power of the Poor in History*, Maryknoll (NY.), 1983, p. 197.

humankind today. In the suffering of these people, as Min notes, "the universal dignity of humans 'as' humans — which is the view-point of the ethical and thus the concern of us all 'as' humans — is most at stake..." Also, therefore, through the liberation of the poor, it is the destiny of the whole humankind that is secured. Hence, it is argued that the perspective of the poor is "a result of reasoned choice" and "can indeed claim universal significance".

Finally, before we close this section, it has to be mentioned that the hermeneutical privilege of the option for the poor has only a relative, not absolute value. This means that though it is a necessary condition for scientific theological reflection today, it is not sufficient by itself. As John O'Brien says, "The acquisition of the perspective of the option for the poor is not a substitute for theoretical rigour in theology... In other words, the adoption of the standpoint of the poor does not 'per se' guarantee the truth and objectivity of theological reflections. However, according to liberation theologians, the scientific rigour and rationality of theology is today necessarily bound up with a commitment to the struggles of the poor and the oppressed²⁷.

1. 3. 0. The problem of transcendence

The above discussion was an attempt to answer the objections raised at the scientific level against the appropriation of Marxist analysis by liberation theologians. However, in this critical analysis in which we try to understand and evaluate liberation theology's relation to Marxism, we ought to, above all, consider questions that have come up at the theological level from the standpoint of faith. The main issue which concerns the critics most at this level is the problem of transcendence. It is argued that there is an inherent incompatibility between theology and Marxist analysis, since the latter is intrinsically linked to an atheistic conception which rejects any kind of transcendence, as evident in its uncompromising critique of religion. In order to assess this objection, therefore, we have to inquire more about the relation between Marxism and atheism. Is atheism so essential that without it Marxism would cease to be Marxism? In other words, is the theory on which Marxist analysis depends necessarily atheistic? Then, we have also to investigate about the Marxist criticism of religion, a criticism

27 O'Brien, J., *The Hermeneutical Privilege of the Poor*, p. 36.

which attributes to the latter only an illusory character — and this seems to be the case even of those Marxists who are considered most sensitive to the contribution of religion. Therefore, we must inquire whether the Marxist theory contains a possibility so as to revise its above criticism and to accord the religious phenomenon a real validity.

These two questions, namely the atheistic character of Marxist theory and its critique of religion, are only negative aspects of the problem concerning the appropriation of Marxism in theology. It is not enough that these aspects considered as obstacles in integrating Marxism into theology be removed. The point is rather whether we can posit a deep convergence at the fundamental level between Christianity and Marxism so that it becomes a foundation for the sort of theoretical collaboration which liberation theologians have advocated between the two. That would be our third point in this section.

1. 3. 1. Is atheism essential to Marxism?

We had stated previously that we would be later explaining why we believe it possible to integrate Marxism into theology inspite of its atheistic character. One of the reasons for that belief is that the connection between Marxism and atheism, as we see it, is not an irreversible or unchangeable one²⁸.

As we attempt to show that atheism is not essential to Marxism, we have to clarify first which Marxism we have in mind. As we have noted earlier, in actuality there are only existing "Marxisms" and not just the ideal "Marxism". Since our concern here is to evaluate and understand liberation theologians' use of Marxism, we begin recalling what the latter represents for them. It has already been stated that they understand Marxism to be basically a science of history and social development, but one associated with the revolutionary praxis of the proletariat. Historical materialism and dialectical materialism are the two 'scientific' facets of this science, each calling for the other owing

28 In the summer 1985 issue of *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, we have an article on this topic by Arthur F. McGovern and also responses to it by seventeen different people. See McGovern, A. F., "Atheism: Is It Essential to Marxism?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 23, 3 (1985), 487-500. For the responses, *Ibid*, pp. 501-591.

to the central concept of praxis. We have also seen that their explanation of dialectical materialism does not necessarily lead to a metaphysical materialism, nor that of historical materialism to a strictly determinist and economic interpretation of history. Moreover, by virtue of the fact that they accord a scientific status to Marxism, both dialectical materialism and historical materialism are confined to "the area of experience and experimental proof" and a "concrete analysis of concrete situation" is affirmed to be the starting point for a Marxist inquiry. Therefore, according to them, as McGovern describes,

Marxism does not see itself as a set of dogmas, determined only by what Marx or Engels said. It sees itself rather as an ongoing movement open to change and revision. Its very method of analysis stresses the study of how ideas are products of changing historical conditions. Hence it would seem consistent with Marxist principles to reevaluate its own atheistic ideology from a historical perspective and to judge whether the original Marxist critiques of religion retain their validity and force today²⁹

The above understanding of Marxism is one which many Marxist intellectuals and most of the contemporary Marxist scholars would agree with. According to it, atheism cannot be the starting point of the objective of Marxism. Moreover, we even believe that there is really no difficulty to show that atheism is not central to what the various types of Marxism are basically all about. For Marx, the supreme value was in human emancipation and, if he talked about emancipation of human beings from religion, it was because he viewed religion as a negation of that value. He writes, "The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, hence with the categorical imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being..."³⁰ The point was clear to Lenin also, despite his strongly militant attitude towards religion. He explains why atheism should not be set forth as part of the Programme of the Proletarian Party: "unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for

29 McGovern, A. F., "Atheism: Is It Essential to Marxism?" p. 488.

30 Marx, K., "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction", in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 175-187, p. 182.

the creation of paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of the proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.³¹

However, it is true that Marx and subsequent Marxist leaders were all atheists. As against this, our argument simply is that they were atheists not because atheism was essential to Marxism, but because, 1) their views were greatly historically conditioned and 2) those historical conditions influenced them to consider atheism as a means or support for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat class. We are convinced that we can fully agree with the following conclusion which McGovern has reached in his article:

Marxism, moreover, is itself not a religion; it is not bound in faith to "what Marx said". If its fundamental value is human emancipation, and if Marxists were to judge (as I have) that religion can enhance rather than negate this emancipation, a conclusion could be reached that atheism is not essential to Marxism³².

Nevertheless, this conclusion will be fully justified only after we have inquired whether atheism is a logical consequence of any concept implicit in Marxist theory. For, according to Ronald F. Thiemann,

Marx's (and by implication Marxism's) view of theism is not primarily an implication of his historical analysis of nineteenth-century bourgeois religion but is rather a logical implication of the concept "praxis". Marx's "atheism" is an implication of praxis, and as long as praxis remains an essential aspect of Marxist thought "atheism" will remain essential as well³³.

In our opinion, however, the contention that atheism is inherent in the concept of praxis is by no means obvious. Of course, praxis remains an essential aspect of Marxist theory. Through this concept, as we have already explained before, Marx was trying to give both a natural and scientific explanation about the course of history, about phenomena 'in' the universe. But according to us, this cannot be regarded as the ultimate explanation 'of' the universe. For, then, this concept goes beyond being a natural and scientific explanation.

31 Lenin, V. I., *On Religion*, Moscow, 1978, p. 10.

32 McGovern, A. F., "Atheism: Is it Essential to Marxism?", p. 497.

33 Thiemann, R. F., "Praxis: The Practical Atheism of Karl Marx", *Journal of*

Now, if those committed to the Marxist notion of praxis still viewed atheism as essential to it, it is indeed possible to have an explanation for that. They always regarded the whole problem as an ever irreconcilable "conflict between human autonomy and dependence upon God. For them, dependence on God is an alienating dependence, as it, in their view, negated the power of human-species for self-construction and thus usurped from human beings their very being. However, should every dependence be alienating for human persons? As Thiemann himself admits, one might very well ask

whether the Marxist commitment to autonomous self-creation is compatible with Marx's emphasis upon the social character of all human activity. Social activity is shared activity. Doesn't the primacy of species-life suggest that we discover our true freedom only within the patterns of mutual cooperation which mark our common life? If that is the case, then Marxist praxis not only tolerates but also values elements of co-human dependence. Whether that valuing can be extended to include dependence upon God is, of course, the key question...³⁴

Further, is it realistic to claim unlimited freedom for human beings? Even for many Marxists, "a realistic analysis of human freedom shows it to require embodiment; nature and history which it dominates, also condition it in return. If it is true that man frees man, it is also true that man is not sufficient to set man free."³⁵ According to us, Marx himself who knew quite well that human persons are dependent on the power of things and on the exigencies of history, moved in the end closer to the above position.

1.3.2. Marx's critique of religion

Any attempt trying to establish a basis for the appropriation of Marxism in theology will have to assess necessarily Marx's critique of religion. As it is well known, his view about religion is almost entirely found in his early writings. There, he is seen to reject religion in an unqualified way. It is for him "an inverted

Ecumenical Studies, 22, 3 (1985), 544-549, p. 544.

34 Thiemann, R. F., "Praxis: The Practical Atheism of Karl Marx", pp. 547-548.

35 Girardi, G., "Atheism and the Problem of Morality", p. 324, *Concurrence* 1, 4 (1969)

world-consciousness'', a thorough ideology which is destined to vanish. And moreover, in the Marxist tradition the most common attitude towards religion is structured basically around this critique.

Now, the problem is, in the light of this Marxist critique of religion, how consistent a theology could be, if it tries to make use of Marx when doing theology. Is it not by this enterprise contradicting itself? Or, is it possible at all to justify such an enterprise? We shall try to answer these questions in two stages, first showing that Marx's criticism of religion found in his earlier writings can be rejected on the basis of his own principles formulated in his later writings—in this case it would mean that Marxist method need not necessarily lead to the conclusion which Marx had reached with regard to religion in his early writings, and second, pointing out that there are indications to suggest that Marx himself had revised his earlier position regarding religion.

It can be seen that Marx's conclusion that religion as such is an alienation is not based on a scientific analysis of the concrete data of religion,

while in general Marx presents his theory of society as mediated through practice and therefore subject to development, modification, and principle even to falsification, through the ongoing historical process, his theory of religion is asserted with a metaphysical absoluteness³⁶.

Marx's criticism, therefore, tends to be, in fact, a sweeping generalization. As in the words of Marko Kersevan, "it would not be Marxist — not even historically materialistic — to consent to such generalizations of Marx³⁷.

We can, following Hinkelammert, conclude that Marx had to revise his earlier position with regard to religion. The young Marx had described communism as a realm of freedom and had affirmed that it was fully achievable. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* we read:

(Communism is) the restoration of man as a 'social', that is, human being. This communism as completed naturalism is

36 Davis, C., *Theology and Political Society*, pp. 125-126.

37 Kersevan, M., "Atheism: Is It Essential to Marxism?", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 22, 3 (1985), 501-506, p. 503.

humanism, as completed humanism it is naturalism. It is the 'genuine' resolution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man; it is the true resolution of the conflict between existence and essence, objectification and self affirmation, freedom and necessity, individual and species. It is the riddle of history solved and knows itself as this solution³⁸.

Now, Marx had based his earlier critique of religion on the attainability of the realm of freedom, which he is seen to affirm in the above passage. However, it can be said that in *Capital* Marx has broken with this earlier position. Here, the realm of freedom is not presented as fully attainable, but "is conceptualized as the anticipation of fulfillment". For, he writes,

The realm of freedom really begins only where labor determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper...Freedom...can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power, accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis³⁹.

This analysis in *Capital*, which believes that the realm of freedom is not fully attainable, can, therefore, be taken to show that the young Marx's critique of religion needed to be revised. We are not, however, sure to what extent Marx himself was conscious of this change in his position. Strictly speaking, he was at that stage no longer interested in religion.

1. 3. 3. Convergence on the fundamental level

Our discussion above on the nature of the relation between Marxism and atheism and, then, the assessment of Marx's critique

38 Marx K., *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 1944, New York, 1969, p. 135.

39 Marx, K., *Capital*, vol. 3, London, 1974, p. 820. See also Hinkelammert, F. J., *The Ideological Weapons of Death*, pp. 54-58 and Laishley, F. J., "Repression and Liberation in the Church: II. An Anatomy of Liberation", *The Heythrop Journal of Theology*, 23 (1988), 329-342, pp. 334-336.

of religion were intended to show how the objections aimed at the incorporation of Marxist analysis by liberation theology could be got around. However, to justify the sort of collaboration which the latter has suggested between theology and Marxism, it needs, according to us, a convergence of the two on the fundamental level. Have liberation theologians posited any such convergence?

As noted earlier, Marx and the subsequent Marxist leaders have all rejected any belief in the existence of God, whereas such a belief is central to Christianity. In spite of this divergence which is explained to take place on a second level (but not secondary), a convergence on the fundamental level can be shown to be existing between the two. Here, we think that it is helpful to start with Segundo's description about 'anthropological faith' and its relation to 'religious faith'.

Anthropological faith is for Segundo 'an indispensable component', a dimension of every human life⁴⁰. It is so basic to human existence that it is 'as universal as the human species itself whether religion be involved or not. Segundo sees it inescapably bound up with some form of meaning-structure or value-structure. According to him, human beings need a value-structure to give direction and meaning to their lives. Anthropological faith, however,

hierarchizes what we call "values", arriving ultimately at one to which it subordinates all the rest. We call that one value "absolute", not because it is actually realized or because it is an absolute being, but because that value as such, in the life of the person who chose it, is not subordinated to, or conditioned by, any other values. All other values are subordinated to it⁴¹.

Thus, according to Segundo's description, there is something in the human persons which makes a specific value more worthwhile than others. He calls this a "transcendent datum" of anthropological faith.

Having talked about anthropological faith, he proceeds to point up another dimension of human life — which he designates as "religious faith". This is not to be confused with

40 Segundo, J. L. *Faith and Ideologies*. p. 25.

41 Ibid. p. 25.

what is the most obvious and ordinary sociological sense of the term "religion". The latter case generally denotes, not a realm of value-structure but of instrumentality (seeking out instruments effective to attain values). But religious faith in the authentic sense "becomes a vehicle of value and meaning to some extent" and therefore comes closer to anthropological faith⁴².

However, from our point of view, the important thing is how Segundo describes the two to be related to each other. Even though the two are distinct, according to him, what we call "faith" in the religious sense is a particular instance subsumed under this more universal anthropological dimension of faith. Further, whenever he talks about authentic religious faith, he means one that is in continuity with anthropological faith. He thereby implies that the former develops only after being grounded in the latter. It is always preceded by and is simply the "prolongation" of the latter. In other words, in his scheme, anthropological faith has some kind of a primacy. For him, therefore, as Marsha A. Hewitt writes, "it is not God who defines the values by which a human being should live, it is rather those values, the choice of which is prior to the development of religious faith, which identify or point toward that God in whom one believes"⁴³.

The reason why we have sketched above Segundo's description of anthropological faith is to show that theology and Marxism converge on the fundamental level and that the divergence on the second level need not be incompatible with that convergence. He writes, "then from an anthropological standpoint it is not proper to set up a meaning based division between "believers" and "nonbelievers"⁴⁴. In the attempt of integrating Marx into theology, it is not only that a "meaning-based division" is ruled out, but a close affinity in value-structure is identified. The key to this affinity is the humanism of Marx — a humanism which is not limited to young Marx alone. By reading Marx in a humanist key, it is possible to assert that for him too, as it was for Jesus, the welfare of the human being constituted

42 Ibid. p. 62.

43 Hewitt, M. A., *From Theology to Social Theory: Juan Luis Segundo and the Theology of Liberation*, New York, 1990. p. 57.

44 Ibid., p. 25.

the absolute, unconditioned value. In other words, one can identify in Marx the presence of that anthropological faith (in Segundo's view, a transcendent datum) which ought to be the basis of authentic Christian religious faith.

Thus, we have acknowledged a deep convergence between Christianity and Marxism on what is fundamental, namely a persistent concern for human welfare. But this does not rule out difference in other areas. Now, the point that needs to be raised is whether the differences in other areas will make the convergence on the fundamental level incompatible. M. A. Hewitt thinks that they will do so. The reason for her assumption is that Marx's affirmation of human autonomy clearly rejected not only religion and theology as forms of ideology but also the notion of God itself. However, it has to be noted that her above inference is based on Marx's position in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844). At that time, as we have seen earlier, it was his belief that a fully socialist society was a project which was humanly attainable. We have, with Hinkelammert, pointed out that later in *Capital* we can notice a change in this position of Marx, even though it was, strictly speaking, at the level of a philosophy of freedom and he might not have been completely aware of it. Still this change, according to us, allows the possibility that Marxism need not be conceptually closed to transcendence.

According to Hinkelammert, however, what led Marx to break with his earlier position was his method of analysis. It is grounded in a particular conception of meaning and value — "real life ultimately determines values" and therefore, it consists in "the analysis of human life in the production and reproduction of real life". This method, according to which the real material life is the ultimate basis for all human life (including religious life), is considered to be the core of Marxism. "The Marxist system is elaborated by means of the method, not the other way around." That is why liberation theologians say that they are accepting Marxism as a method.

2. 0. 0. Towards an evaluation

Liberation theologians wanted to remake the whole of theology through a methodology which was clearly indebted to

Marx. The fact that they wanted to engage in a theological method which drew upon Marxist insights had provoked strong reactions and criticisms, especially from the Vatican. The positive reception which they gave to some of the basic Marxist thoughts — Marx's dialectical, historical materialism and his philosophy or praxis — became thus the most problematic and burning issue concerning liberation theology. The uncompromising opposition to the appropriation of those insights by liberation theologians was, we believe, due to the various implications which that process had for theology. These implications, in our opinion, had to do with the understanding about the nature of theology, its status as a discipline, and the interpretation of concepts like faith and revelation, Scriptures, Church, tradition etc. on which Christian theology rests. Our evaluation of liberation theology's relation to Marxism will, therefore, have to take into account how its Marx-indebted method affects the understanding of these issues.

Liberation theology is, indeed, intensely concerned with the practical liberation of the poor and the oppressed. However, at the same time, it has presented itself, especially in the early years, called its foundational period (1968-1975), as a new way of doing theology in direct opposition to the prevailing traditional and academic theological models. In our work, we have concentrated on this latter aspect of liberation theology. According to us, the articulation of a new theological methodology by liberation theologians is an attempt to transform theology from within and as such has implications for theology as a whole. Therefore, the understanding of liberation theology as a new way of doing theology turns out to be its most distinctive aspect.

Reference to praxis is found in the Marxist tradition at two levels. On a narrower level, it refers to revolutionary praxis and criticism. As a critique of idealist philosophy, praxis on this level means that theory should be geared to the transformation of the world. Implied here is the historical consciousness that every reality is changeable. Marx's most famous thesis on Feuerbach — "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point is to change it" — is often referred to in this sense. On a broader level, however, praxis relates to the understanding that humans constitute themselves through what they do in intercourse with nature. Further, this view looks at

history as a process in which human essence is being actualized through activity. On this level, therefore, praxis is considered not only as the goal of knowledge but also as its ground. Praxis taken in this meaning calls for an epistemological break in the history of philosophy. In clear contrast to an abstract conception of knowledge and rationality, this understanding honours the dimension of human activity through which a person transforms nature in response to his or her total needs. In that sense, it is the essential unifying principle of our humanity.

Liberation theologians have integrated both meanings into their theology. We think that praxis with the two senses taken together, when also combined with other Marxist insights, such as the view of society's life as a concrete totality, the inter-relatedness of human agency and social structures, and the sociality of human existence, can provide theologians with an adequate horizon for theologizing. Marxism views society as a concrete totality constituted by different spheres which are inter-dependent but also relatively autonomous. In this totality, however, all spheres are not considered as having equal influence upon shaping the whole or in relation to other areas. We have already seen why this interpretation, known as historical materialism, takes the economic sphere to have a unifying power over other spheres and upon the whole. It does so, because, first, it rejects the primacy of universal or abstract theory, and, second, it assumes that all theory and reflection are dependent, though not in a deterministic or mechanistic way, on the practical conditions of life.

Another factor which adds to the significance of the Marxist framework as a horizon for theology is that it conceives of human praxis as a dialectic of the human agency and social structures. The human person is not only the acting subject, but also the object acted upon by the given social factors. What this involves is that praxis comprises of two dimensions, "action" and "passion". A social theory which ignores the interrelatedness of the human agency and social structures will be inadequate to shed light on human existence. Moreover, Marxism emphasizes also the sociality of human existence. A true social theory will have to take into account this aspect of human existence in order to avoid individualism.

The accepted definition of theology among liberation theologians, as we know, is the one given by Gutierrez: theology is a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Word. Gutierrez sometimes alternates between "historical praxis" and "liberation praxis". We have already explained earlier that historical praxis is more general and foundational, while liberation praxis is the special form which the former takes (or ought to take) in the particular situation of Latin America. This has led us to conclude that when praxis is used in liberation theology as a foundational category, it refers, under the influence of Marx, to the process whereby humans create themselves by transforming the natural and social conditions of their lives. By assigning a foundational place to praxis in his definition of theology, Gutierrez is in our view, affirming that the human realm is prior to the religious realm and that *Christianity* is subsumed in human history. In other words, for liberation theologians, the primary focus is humanity, and their approach to theology stems from a pre-theological commitment, that is, as they explain, their type of theology is chosen for non-theological reasons.

According to liberation theologians, therefore, theology must be founded on human experience and must begin with concrete human history. Hence, the understanding about the nature and task of theology is different from that in the classical definition. The primary concern of liberation theology is not that of defending the truth of Christianity, nor of explaining divine revelation received in faith and handed down as dogmatic formulations. Its preoccupation is primarily with humanity, society and historical projects of liberation. As a result, theology is also political, not in the sense that clearly defined theological principles can be applied to political situations, but because theological reflection is based on questions arising out of the concrete practical realities of our human lives. Thus, theology belongs to the practical sphere of human existence and this so much so that there is no autonomous religious or theological realm of reality existing. It is, therefore, necessary that theology opens itself up to social and human sciences in order to gain insights about history and society. For, not only a Christian analysis of reality, but also a sociological analysis of Christianity becomes an integral part of theological reflection.

Therefore, when liberation theology emphasizes the recovery of present social experience as foundational for theology, its focus is on the recovery of the experience of the marginalized and hitherto excluded sections. This is put forward in its claim for an hermeneutic privilege of the poor and the oppressed, about which claim, we think, we have discussed earlier in sufficient detail. The move from academic theology to people's theology is not, however, anti-intellectual. In liberation theology's view, it is an attempt to elaborate an authentic theology with the poor as its subject, as part of their becoming the subjects of their own lives. According to us, the move towards people's theology includes the recognition that all theologies are political, and that it is, therefore, necessary to ask whose perspective is involved while doing theology.

However, implied in the articulation of the liberation method is a total break with the orthodoxy that classically characterizes the traditional theology, like the one reflected in the Vatican's position vis-a-vis liberation theology. This theological position was seen to insist on a "distinction of planes" leading to a separation between faith and politics, Church and world, sacred history and profane history. This conception is rooted in an approach which pictures transcendence as floating above the world. There exist two separate languages, one based on supernatural revelation to speak of religious realities and the other rooted in human reality and meant to deal with earthly or temporal matters. Therefore, the horizon behind such a theology reflected a static and historical view of human reality. A theology adopting such a horizon cannot be hoped, according to liberation theologians, to be a force in changing the world, but must rather remain an ideology supporting the powers legitimizing the status quo.

In our view, liberation theologians have set themselves the goal, in contrast to both traditional and academic theologies, to make use of a different horizon in theologizing. This horizon which should govern the interpretation of the reality of God and the understanding of the Christian theological themes, is indeed characterized by the Marxist category of praxis. The use of this particular horizon has, of course, various implications for theology. It brings about a shift in the understanding of theology and a different interpretation of its foundations and

also of its status as a theoretical discipline. As life is viewed as fundamentally practical, theology has no place other than just being one specific form of the practical activity of human existence. Revelation of a "once-and-for-all" nature is being rejected, but from this it does not follow that the possibility of revelation itself is done away with. Further, there is a kind of relativization of the unique significance of Jesus Christ, Scripture, Church and tradition. Indeed, theology is no longer the immutable sacred science, but has become, though important, one among other human disciplines. But, the decisive question is: do all these things mean the negation of theology? True, we perceive here a rupture, both with the traditional and academic theologies. But this rupture must be described as a "continuity through radical transformation". What is particularly important to note is that the breach is not with theology as such, but only with traditional theology in its classical form. If this breach is total, it heralds perhaps the end of a classical way of doing theology, but in the emergence of a new quest for God.

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Book Review

Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us, The Trinity and the Christian Life*, San Francisco: Harper, 1991; pp. xiii, 484, \$ 25.

This is an historical and theoretical analysis that restores the doctrine of the Trinity of God to the heart of Christian theology. The guiding principle of the book is "that for Christian theology, the mystery of God can be thought of only in terms of the mystery of grace and redemption" (p. 2). The main problem that the author addresses is that of late, Christian theology is generally perceived and criticized as being "projective" (Feuerbach and Freud); "sexist, patriarchal and clerical" (Feminism); "bankrupt" (atheism; and the Death-of-God); static (Process Thought); "ideological" (Liberation Theology); non-referential (Analytical philosophy). These critiques, according to the author, "testify to the deleterious outcome of the Christian doctrine of God that is in many respects secular, constructed out of

philosophy, not out of the self-revelation of God in Christ" (p. 3).

The main thesis of the book is that though the doctrine of the Trinity is more than the doctrine of salvation, "theologia and oikonomia, the mystery of God and the mystery of salvation, are inseparable". The fundamental issue in trinitarian theology is not the inner workings of the 'immanent' Trinity, but the question of how the trinitarian pattern of salvation history is to be correlated with the eternal being of God. Just as in Christology, also in the mystery of the Trinity a view from above has to be fully integrated with a theology from below. More than the psychological emphasis of Augustine and the West, Lacugna prefers the social theme of communion favoured by the Cappadocian fathers. Hence, person, not substance, is the ultimate ontological category. "The communion among persons, divine and human, and indeed, the communion of all creatures with one another and with God, takes place in the economy that spans creation to the eschaton" (p. 15).

The specific contribution of Lacugna seems to be in the final chapter, where she explains the practical consequence of the Trinitarian mystery. According to the doctrine of the Trinity, God lives as the mystery of love among persons. The common life of God and creature is the source for articulating the demands of the Gospel, regarding what constitutes right relationship. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity remains derivative, derived from the economy, as "a summary of Christian faith, not its premise", (p. 381). It revolutionizes how we think about God and about ourselves, the form of life, the politics of God's economy (p. 383). The monarchy of the Trinity which is actually "triadike arche" (threefold rule), gives the political ideal of the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another. A monadic subjective conception of the Trinity gives religious legitimacy to political sovereignty, while the equality and communion of persons cannot give any justification to dictators and tyrants.

The Church, the People of God, claims to live the form of life appropriate to God's economy. The Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, is participation in the triune life of God. "Sexual life is the most conspicuous way that human beings express themselves both as persons, and as persons who naturally seek communion (p. 406). Trinity is the basis of ethics: "Christian ethics is not generic, but christological and pneumatological". Ethics pertains to right action of persons created in the image of a personal God.

This book is a well-researched work, which clearly shows how Christian faith and life should be totally rooted in the tripersonal God. It is undoubtedly the best book in recent years on the Trinity.

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